Pirouette

by LadySansasDirewolf

Summary

Armitage Hux knew when he first met her they were destined to be together. Then she ran away when Snoke wanted her killed. He's burned out the galaxy looking for her, and now she's right where he wanted - and no one will keep them apart again.

This is my first fan fiction, please be gentle!

Notes

Musical Selection for Chapter One:
'My Immortal'
-Evanescence
Chapter One –

She never saw the shot which hit the engines, nor the one which sheared off a wing. It must have come from the destroyer. The world was spinning, a whirling kaleidoscope of colors moving faster and faster as the ship spiraled toward the firm reality that was her fate if she couldn't pull out. All around her the fight was raging on, the rest of her squad aware she was going down, but unable to interrupt their own peril to assist hers. For the first time in a long time, she faced death with no sure plan for escape.

She could hear voices screaming in her ears, offering advice on what to do, but none of it registered through the thick coat of acceptance she wrapped herself within. No one fell from space in an X-wing and walked away, why should she expect any different result?

She thought about her mother, dead so many years. Would Ciara be there in the afterlife to meet her? Would Aunt Shara and Uncle Kes? Would they forgive her for not being good enough to escape the trap?

She thought about her cousin, so far from here, leading the remnants of the Resistance as the First Order screamed across the galaxy to destroy them. Poe would never forgive her for dying without him, but this time it was out of her hands. She prayed he'd find someone to love, to help move past her leaving him alone.

Lastly, she thought about him. For the first time in two years she allowed herself to feel what she'd abandoned, the love she thought would have been enough for ten lifetimes, until his master pulled the chain. She remembered the blaster that had ripped apart her cheek, the betrayal she'd felt, and the pain of knowledge. As she faced her death she allowed herself to say his name out loud, to acknowledge what she'd stuffed deep and built strong walls to keep herself and others out. "Armi..."

The ground was closer now, she'd made the re-entry without bursting into flames. Her hand found the ejector button, but when she pressed nothing happened. Wild with panic, she pushed again. This time the bonnet blew away but the seat remained in place. Closing her eyes, she reached deep, for the wellspring of the Force she only used when faced with unsurmountable odds. Taking both hands, she slammed down on the button for a third time.

Pain, as the seat rocketed from the failing fighter; fear, when she noticed how uncomfortably close the ground appeared; then just before darkness took her away, a voice she'd not heard since she fled Coruscant, and she opened a momentary connection to the only person whose face she truly wanted to see again before she died.

"Lyric?"

His face was pale when her recognized her voice.

"Armitage."

He then realized she was the Resistance pilot he'd seen plummet toward the planet beneath the star destroyer. He realized she was in trouble, and he's was the hand that caused it. She'd never seen him ruffled, unsure for once.
Armitage Hux screamed to the stars in pain and fear, "LYRIC!"

Then blackness tore her away as the ejected seat slammed into the surface of Yavin 4, and Lyric Bey succumbed to the release of forever, while First Order shuttles rocketed into the atmosphere above her crash site.

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Three months after the disaster on Crait and the Resistance was finally settled at the hidden base on Tatooine. They were few, they were battered, and it seemed the hits would keep coming.

Three days after moving in General Leia Organa called for Poe and Rey, Finn and Rose tagging along even though they weren't invited. Once in Leia's private quarters, she seemed to sag into her chair.

"Poe," she began uneasily, "there's no way to put this that isn't painful, so I'm just going to be frank. The First Order ran across a supply ship headed to Yavin. They launched an attack on the Rebel base on Yavin 4. It wasn't pretty, and a lot of pilots are missing."

Rey noticed all the color draining from Dameron's face. Obviously, he knew someone well.

His voice was barely more than a whisper. "Lyric?"

"We don't know yet. There were reports she was shot down, but until the situation is stabilized let's pray she's alright. Knowing your family, I expect to hear she's made it to the gathering zone. Would you like to go meet the incoming transports, see if they know anything?"

As Poe nodded, Rey asked the general, "Who is Lyric?"

"Lyric Bey," Rose broke in excitedly. "It would have to be Lyric Bey, the prima ballerina of the Coruscant Ballet, the most beautiful woman in the Core planets. My sister and I saw her once at a special performance back before we left home. She's related to Poe?"

Leia nodded. "They're cousins. Poe's mother Shara had a sister, Ciara, who bore Lyric out of wedlock, never would reveal who was the father. When Ciara went mad, Poe took in Lyric, raising her from the age of seven. Two years, when she turned eighteen, she resigned from the ballet and joined the Resistance. Just like her aunt and cousin, she's one hell of a pilot. She'd been on Yavin for only weeks before the attack."

Rose pulled up on her datapad a vid of Lyric Bey dancing that was made at her last performance. Rey and Finn watched in amazement at the tall, willowy, figure with the dark curly Bey hair. She was breathtaking and Rey watched as the Force ebbed and flowed with her movements. Never on Jakku had she seen ballet and it was like watching the Force in physical form.

"She's beautiful." Rey breathed. "How did she become a Resistance fighter?"

Leia glanced at Poe. "It's really not my story to tell, but..."

Poe picked up the narrative. "No, I'll do it."

He squared his shoulders and looked at his friends. "When Lyric was sixteen she was chosen as the principle dancer at the ballet on Coruscant. No one that young had ever been selected, and there were rumors of all sorts of things. Then, Lyric's biological father discovered her identity after she became a star, and came looking for my aunt to get in touch with her. There was an argument, and Aunt Ciara was murdered by her former lover."
"A stalker came looking for Lyric. We managed to get her off planet and with a new name and genome pattern. I taught her to fly, and then introduced her to Resistance leadership."

Leia broke in, all the while holding Poe's hand while he fell apart. "Just like all the Beys, Lyric took to flying like breathing. Her posting to Yavin 4 was only to mask her joining with us soon, so that Poe wouldn't be so distracted in his duties."

Finn piped in, "So that's where you've been when you should have been eating. We've been wondering if it was something we said."

"No buddy, I've been running double duty in the comms center monitoring the First Order traffic around Yavin 4 to make sure she's safe."

"I don't remember any Lyric Bey at Yavin," Rey remarked, having been on the supply run only the week previous.

"That's because she's enlisted under another name," Poe muttered. "Mine."

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The pain was unbearable. Even with her high tolerance, developed after years and years of dancing until her feet bled and her body collapsed from stress and exhaustion, it threatened to overwhelm her, stop her ability to focus. Already she knew there was something seriously wrong with her back. She couldn't feel her legs, and though she'd unhooked the rigging from the ejected seat, she couldn't make her body respond to the command to run. It was certain the First Order saw where she'd jettisoned the X-wing, and if they discovered her, who she was...

Using her elbows, she managed to crawl into a thicket of spruce, hiding her from any quick glance. Only a thorough look would expose her, which made it just a matter of time until the storm troopers send to clean up the mess would find her. Looking up at the sky, she could hear her mother's voice, reminding her of what would happen when they did. When he found her.

"Never let them know you are my daughter. You are Poe's to take care of, he is family. He will give his life to protect yours, and no matter what, hide the truth of what you are."

Another voice came to mind, drowning out her mother as usual. "You are stronger than this little one, ignore the pain, and free yourself. I did not teach you to fail. Now, again."

Her dance master. The first man to see her potential, the first man to break her soul piece by piece each day until she had nothing left, who sold her body like property, until she'd met a man who still held the other half of her heart. Who she'd abandoned for the chance to be her own person. How many times she wondered if she made the right choice. But it was too late now. Chances were better than one hundred percent that she was screwed.

She could see his eyes even now, knows he has ripped apart the galaxy to find her again. Cold blue eyes that professed to only love her, but whose love was a different possession from her master. Thank the Maker she'd been able to escape before he'd been able to complete his assignment of her. Especially now that the First Order was gaining territory. But her luck appeared to have at last run out.

She must have passed out from the pain, as the next thing she knew, there was a blaster at her temple, and two other Stormtroopers trying to get her to her feet.

"Please, no!" She gasped aloud at the intense burst of pain that ripped through her frame. "I surrender, but there's something wrong with my back."
One trooper went to find a superior while the others kept her under watch. She only hoped they were tasked with taking prisoners. Otherwise, she was dead where she lay. With her eyes closed against the pain, she reached inside her mind to the spot where Poe always dwelt inside.

"Forgive me, cousin."

She sensed several people coming over, including medics and two officers. After being loaded onto the floating stretcher, they injected her with a pain med and cuffed her wrists to the sides. Two hands reached up to her helmet, to remove it.

No, they'd know who she was, she had to keep her helmet.

Her hands reached up, trying to fight, only managing to Force throw a trooper against the far wall. Kriff, now they would certainly find out who she was.

The two officers came over to see what was going on.

"What's wrong Sergeant?" The shorter of the two men had an Inner Core accent, and all of a sudden Lyric's mouth went dry. It couldn't be him. Her luck couldn't be that bad.

"Resistance pilot, General. She's injured and combative."

The taller man wore a mask. She knew who that was. More importantly Ren knew her. She'd met him before with Hux, in her old life. Now her fate was definitely sealed. Kylo Ren waved his hand over her and suddenly her world compressed to the air she could breathe.

Immobilized in the Force, her screams fell silent behind the stasis he imposed. She fought back as best she could, unable to reach deep, unable to feel as much as she needed to throw off his binding.

The Sergeant ripped the helmet off with no compassion or feeling. Jet black curls tumbled down, exposing flawless porcelain skin, with her amber eyes, blazing hatred at the men. The shorter of the two grabbed her dog tag and yanked hard. He never looked her in the face

"Leah Dameron," Armitage Hux read off, the disdain rolling off him in waves. "Any relation to the self-proclaimed best pilot in the Resistance asshole Poe Dameron?"

"His wife." She managed to grit the words out, cloaking emotions she knew that Kylo Ren could read. "I guess you've met him."

"I've not had the pleasure, but he's annoyed me to great lengths recently. I look forward to being able to return the compliment, soon." Still the man looked elsewhere, until Ren touched his shoulder, motioning for him to look at their prisoner. Hux looked at her, then looked again, his eye narrowing in anger.

He bent down closer, "But right now, I look forward to getting to know more about him, and you, over the coming days. I think I deserve some answers. Medic!"

The medic bowed, "Yes General?"

"Take her to my med-bay. I want her stable and able to answer questions in an hour. If she dies, you'll follow right behind her. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, General."

Lyric felt the bottom fall out of the world, and she fell back into the abyss.
"Rey?"

She turned around. Poe was behind her, hands running through his hair, dark circles under eyes, in short – he was a mess. Her heart went out to him. He loved his family, especially an orphan like herself, and that hit Rey in her soft heart.

"What's up Poe?"

"I know this is strange, but do you still have that funky thing with Kylo Ren?"

She stiffened. "Why?"

"I'm sorry, I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but …"

"You want to know about your cousin?"

He ran his hand through his hair again. "Am I that obvious?"

She pulled him into a hug. "I'll see what I can find out. I haven't been talking with him much since Crait, but this is important."

Rey returned to her private rooms and locked all the doors. Sitting on the bed, she threw open the door she'd built against Ben. Not much, just enough to let him know she needed to ask him a question.

He was pissed, of course.

"Why now?"

"I need information about a possible prisoner you have."

"Let me guess, Leah Dameron."

"Well yes, but that's not her real name."

That interested him at last. "Why would she use a false name?"

"She's in hiding. Her life was threatened by several people and Poe volunteered to help facilitate a new identity."

All of a sudden, Kylo's face lit up with understanding. "Kriff, do you mean to tell me that we have Lyric Bey in our holding cells?"

"Yes, and her cousin is frantic to know she's alright."

"Her cousin?"

Rey chewed on her lip.

"That's why she's using the pilot's name?"

"Yes. Do you know who she's hiding from?"

Kylo nodded. "Yeah, she's hiding from Armitage Hux."
Hux entered his private quarters and secure locked the doors after his entrance. He threw his gloves and hat onto the table by the door, then crossed to the bottle of Corellian brandy on the counter. He poured two fingers and threw them down in a single gulp, then poured two more. His desk chair faced out an enormous transparasteel window, the stars of hyperspace flowing by, like a river of light. Throwing himself down, he stared out the window, lost in memories he thought dead and buried.

Lyric.

The girl had to be Lyric, there was no other woman in the galaxy with those eyes, those lips, those long dancer legs he'd often fantasized wrapped around his waist. Three years she'd been missing, most of the universe thought her dead, Snoke swore to him she was dead, yet here she was, in his med-bay. Somehow, Ren's mysterious Force had restored the love of his life.

Now, he just needed to keep her here.

First of all, he wanted to know how injured she was. When she'd somehow called out to him through space, he'd known immediately what was happening. He'd seen the TIE fighter blast the left wing off her ship, knew how slim the odds. When he'd seen those eyes on the stretcher, he'd been caught between immense relief she'd survived, and the anger he'd been carrying for two plus years that she'd left in the first place. He called to the medic on duty. He was anxious to question her, if she was stable.

"She's not out of the woods by any means, General. There are extensive internal injuries, broken ribs, cracked vertebra, and a shattered ankle. Not to mention burns and lacerations from the wreck. We've put her into a bacta tank, but it will be a while before we know how things are going."

Hux clenched and released his fist several times before he was calm enough to speak without shouting. "I want to be notified the moment she regains consciousness do you understand? No matter what hour."

"Of course, General."

A shattered ankle, that was worrisome, not mention the broken back. A dancer needed her ankles. He pulled open one of his desk drawers and pulled out a holovid he kept hidden from most. Ren knew, but then Ren knew everything. Snoke had known, and for the first time since it had happened, Hux was glad the lurking menace was gone. The Supreme Leader had faulted Hux for his feelings toward Lyric, and he'd often felt her disappearance was one of Snoke's attempt to bring him as completely under control as Kylo Ren.

The holovid was one of Lyric's most famous performances, her grand presentation as the prima ballerina in Coruscant. Every line of her body moved in poetic perfection, and more than one man had fallen in love with the willowy brunette that night. Afterward, he'd been presented to her at the reception. They'd talked until the sun arose, and when he'd kissed her hand as she left, his heart synced with hers.

For months he pursued her, against Snoke's wishes, against his father's commands, even against his own common sense. Hux had a tendency to be intense, and his pursuit was nothing less. Her disappearance at the top of her profession led to much speculation, including that she'd married and run off with one of her many suitors. Only Hux knew it was a façade. She'd run from him, from what Snoke made him. And she'd taken his heart with her.
Now she was back. The universe had granted him another chance, and this time he wasn't taking any chances. She'll stay with him this time. No one would take his love away. No one.
Recollections

Chapter Summary

As Lyric recovers, others share their memories of the bright, loving child she was. Meanwhile, Lyric discovers an old friend is closer than she knew.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Reminiscing'
Patty Monroe

Chapter Two - Recollections

Rey found Poe busy in the comms center, listening to First Order traffic.

"Poe, they have her."

He threw his arms around Rey. "Oh thank the gods. Is she alright? Has he seen her?"

"Let's go tell Leia, so I can go through this all at once."

The entire way to Leia's offices, Rey could feel the energy bouncing off of Poe. He was desperate to know about his cousin, and Rey hoped her information wouldn't prove detrimental to their situation.

Leia was resting with a cup of tea and a sheaf of paper. She motioned for the two of them to sit.

"Leia, Ben has seen Lyric. She's in a med-bay on Punisher, after being pulled from the wreck of an ejector seat. She's not in good shape. Lots of internal and back injuries, along with a shattered ankle. Ben said she's in a tank, under heavy sedation. Right now, it's still touch and go as to whether or not she'll survive."

Poe's emotions ran from panicked to relieved to panicked again.

"Poe, I'm sorry, but it appears that General Hux is on Punisher as well, and he knows who she is. Ben thinks she's alright while injured, he can't get to her in the med-bay without witnesses, but if they release her to the holding cells, or to Hux himself then all bets are off."

"That's what I was afraid of, him recognizing her. That's why we changed her name."

"It doesn't matter Poe. Once he saw her eyes, he knew it was her. Ben says Hux has been in love with her for years. He's put standing orders up that he's to be notified the moment she awakens, and he's already got people working on a rehab schedule."
Poe's face darkened with anger. "It's his fault she had to run away in the first place!"

Rey frowned. "Ben?"

"No, Hux. He became obsessed with her, and refused to see she wasn't interested in being tied down to a man who rules from a starship. When she wouldn't accept his proposal of marriage, he swore no other man would ever have her. For months he followed her, spied on her, bribed people to report on her. It took forever to plan her extraction, and even so it was touch and go. He almost caught her at the ship."

Rey hugged Poe. He leaned into her shoulder and sighed. "If he presses her again, I don't know if her strength in the Force is enough to protect her from his possessiveness."

She looked at him questioningly. "Lyric is Force sensitive?"

Poe nodded. "Nothing like you of course. Hers manifests through dance. She can make you feel more alive than breathing, more emotion than you thought possible. But sometimes she can touch my mind. Just little things to let me know she's alive. Not too much, in case Snoke was still looking for her."

"Now that Snoke is dead, you should try to reach her."

He shook his head. "First of all, I'm not sensitive. Second, if I were it could endanger her. We need a plan to get her off Punisher, and soon. No one outside of the family knows she's Force-sensitive."

Rey shook her head. "I don't think we can do anything until she's able to move on her own. We don't have the facilities or the medical staff yet. But if I find her through the Force, I will let her know you are trying to think of a way to free her."

"Rey, Lyric is the only family I have left. I can't lose her."

"I know. Ben is going to keep an eye on Hux, keep him off balance and unable to move against her. That gives us time to figure how to get her off that destroyer."

Leia chimed in. "Poe, Lyric knows how to protect herself from Hux, she'll be fine with Ben's help, and I'm sure he won't even bother with her until she's awake. We have time to work on her freedom. Focus on that, not on Hux."

"Yes ma'am." Rey could tell Poe was too strung out to hear reason.

After Poe left, Rey stayed with Leia. She wanted to know more about Lyric Bey and the red-haired general's obsession.

Leia sighed heavily. "Lyric, gods she was a beautiful child. That thick, curly Bey hair, along with porcelain skin and the most unusual amber eyes, there wasn't an adult on Yavin 4 that didn't adore that girl. She started dancing before walking, and her graceful, silky movements were pictures of the Force the flesh. By the time she was ten, there was an air of destiny around her. She was the daughter I hadn't had, and I loved her along with everyone else. She could even make Ben smile."

"But when Poe left on his first assignment, Lyric lost something in herself. I think his absence pounded home that she really was an orphan too. She hopped a freighter to Coruscant at fourteen and managed to get an audition with the Imperial Ballet, then renamed the Coruscant Ballet. Within two years she was their principal ballerina, and before another year ended, she was on the run from Snoke, and Hux, then began filtering down through the layers of society until we could grab her and move her off planet."
"Why?" Rey demanded. "Why is he so obsessed with her? I get her beauty, but Hux doesn't strike me as one who even likes women."

Leia chuckled. "Armitage Hux is the bastard son of an old Imperial family. His father was a cruel and abusive man who crafted a sick and ambitious son. Even though it is only rumored he killed his father, Hux is a demented man and Starkiller Base was one of his pet projects. Lyric thought he was interesting, but intense, and she tried to steer clear. But as you and Ben can well attest, the Force often has its own way of working things out. She loved him, and in his own way, I think Hux loved her too, as much as a man like him can love. But Snoke found out."

Rey rolled her eyes. "I can just imagine how that went down."

"Hux was ordered to kill Lyric, to show his devotion to Snoke. And just like with you and Ben, Hux was unable to hurt her, physically. Mentally however, he broke her spirit. The Lyric Bey I met on Naboo on her way to training was not the same girl who ran away at fourteen."

Leia grabbed Rey's hands, imploring her. "See if you can find her in the Force. Poe has some of her things to help you focus on her signature. Let her know we're aware and looking into ways to free her, but under no circumstances is she to try and escape before her injuries are healed. We'll have to move fast, and a broken ankle will keep us from that."

"I will." Rey promised.

Later, alone in her quarters, Rey cracked open her connection as narrowly as she could to try and reach Lyric Bey. But the Force had other ideas. When she opened her eyes, Ben stood in front of her, wearing a black t-shirt and sleep pants.

"Twice in one week, should I be flattered?" He turned, sat on what she assumed was his bed, and looked at her expectantly.

"I was looking for someone else and found you instead." Rey knew it was pointless to lie. Their Force bond would make them honest with each other, no matter how inconvenient that might be. "Is Lyric still in the med-bay?"

Kylo frowned. "Yes, she's going to be out for a while. Hux has ordered special care be taken with her, due to the severity of the accident. He wants her to dance again, which is a tall order right now, given her injuries."

"He still loves her."

"Or thinks he does. Hux has always been extreme in his emotions. Lyric was the first woman he ever met who wasn't one of his father's hand-picked Imperial whores, and he was caught up in her Force without realizing it. I will confess, she's a woman worth being caught up with. When she went on tour with the ballet, it grew into an obsession. When Snoke sent Hux to kill Lyric, the event was a disaster. They attended the Masked Ball that evening, one of the premiere events on Coruscant. He took her home and pulled a blaster on her, held it to her temple and told her he loved her. We aren't sure how but she managed to get away. then she ran, and she became the target of his drive. Having her in his possession cannot work out well.

"I knew her before as a child, then met her with Hux many times. She's intelligent, beautiful, every movement is like watching water moving in harmony with nature. Their relationship was hard for everyone to understand. Personally, I think he represented safety to her. From what I understand, the master of the ballet on Coruscant was a true tyrant and Lyric one of his favorite targets. Hux stopped that, the master disappeared and a new man took his place. And Lyric was never touched
again, by anyone."

Rey grabbed his hand, imploring him. "Ben, you have to keep her safe from him. She's Force sensitive. It manifests in her dance. Her dance is the Force, and Hux is caught in that euphoria it causes. We've heard he has rather, brutal emotions. Do you think he would hurt her, I mean, really hurt her?"

Leaning into Rey's touch, he rubbed the back of her hand while thinking out loud. "It's going to be weeks before she's aware enough to even speak to him. I'll see if I can contact her through the Force. I'm here, and it won't set any alarms if I'm talking to her. She remembers me, I'm sure."

"Ben, please. Don't frighten her. My feelings tell me she's walled herself up to deal with the pain. If you go in too hard, she'll be scared, try to protect herself. If she's as Force strong as you think, you could hurt you without meaning."

He smiled, which she thought might be the first time she ever saw him do so. "For you, I'll protect her as much as I can. If you will do one thing for me."

Rey rolled her eyes. "I am not going to join the Dark Side, Ben."

He chuckled. "That wasn't the question."

"What then?"

"Keep the bond open. Please. I. I like talking with you. It helps keep me grounded, balanced."

"Ben, I promise. But, don't abuse your power. If you appear, and I'm busy, don't torture me or try to talk to me until you know we are alone. I'll do the same for you."

He nodded, another rare smile on his lips. "I promise."

"Good. Now go check on Lyric, and I'm going to train."

"Having problems sleeping?"

"Yeah, Poe's pain is screaming so loud even those who aren't sensitive are hurting. Even Leia is getting edgy from the constant monologue."

"Sit down." Ben patted the bed beside him. "Let me work on your shoulders."

Rey sat down, and Ben began running his fingers over the knots in her neck and shoulders. "You know, if the whole evil overlord thing doesn't pan out for you, you definitely have promise as a masseuse."

"Mm, only if you run away with me." His voice in her ear was melodic and soothing. "We can work in the day, make love all night, and forget the cares of the rest of the galaxy."

"It's a great plan to aspire to. Of course, first you have to give up the evil overlord business."

"Soon." He promised, kissing a line from her shoulder the back of her neck. "But we have to save the pilot's wife, remember?"

"Right. Save Lyric. What?"

Gently he turned her to face him. "Save Lyric later."
His lips caught hers, and before she could answer, the bond took him away. But in the back of her mind, she could still hear him, could hear him murmur, "I love you, Rey."

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Lyric was drifting.

The constant pain had been replaced with a sense of floating on the tides, and Lyric let the Force carry her along where it wanted. Anything to keep the pain at bay. Anything to prolong the moment she would discover this wasn't a bad dream.

He was here. Snoke had finally gotten his way, and Armitage was here to kill her. All those years of running and hiding, the people who died to protect the secrets? Worth nothing because in the end, her executioner won. Perhaps she was already dead, and this was eternity. But why would the Maker not release her fears? Shouldn't the afterlife be peaceful?

"Lyric."

She heard the word through the storm in her mind. It was familiar, a voice she'd heard before, in another life. Not an enemy, potentially a friend.

"Who is this?"

"Someone sent to help you right now."

"Sent by whom?"

There was a brief pause. "Friends. Do you know who I am?"

"Ren, where are you?"

"Here, watching over you. Protecting you. He won't be allowed to hurt you. I will keep you safe, I promise."

At that promise, something inside of her finally collapsed. She wasn't alone. The mental rest she needed finally took hold, and she allowed herself to cut off from everything and heal.

The next time she cycled up toward the light, she truly wasn't alone.

The curve of the bacta tank had been replaced with the starkness of a med-bay bed. The sterile smell of bacta and antiseptic stung her nose, and she wrinkled in protest.

"Nice to see you responding to stimuli. Perhaps you will be out of this bed soon."

Kylo Ren.

She'd never forget that voice. With or without the mask, the new Supreme Leader of the First Order wasn't a man easily forgotten. Still, he was protecting her, just as always.

"Where am I?" Her voice was rusted from lack of use.

"In the med-bay of Punisher. We recovered you from the wreckage on Yavin 4, and you've been in a medical coma for almost a month. You died several times, especially the first few days."

A month of her life gone. "Does anyone know I lived?
Kylo Ren snickered. "Your 'husband' has been made aware of your position and medical condition. I was unaware that cousins were allowed to marry on Yavin 4." His eyes crinkled like he was laughing at her.

She blushed furiously. "It was the quickest way to get a new identity. Poe's been my protector since Mother's murder."

"Who killed Ciara Bey?"

Silence. She chewed on her lip, feeling Ren's mental probe for the information. Lyric slammed down the lid on her memories and glared at the knight.

"Lyric, who was your father?"

"I don't know his name. All I know is he was important under Palpatine's rule but managed to escape prosecution. He raped my mother, then chased her around the galaxy trying to control her. He tried to find me on Coruscant, but Mother stopped him. It killed them both. But Kylo, does Armi know..."

"Who do you think sent me to watch over you?" His tone was soft, understanding. "He's a different man, now that Snoke is dead, and absolutely beside himself that you're injured. I don't he's slept in days."

"Snoke will never be out of his mind though, Kylo. That's where the problem lies. I don't trust him. He held a blaster to my head and said Snoke commanded him to kill me. How do I forgive him that?" Her eyes blazed in hurt and anger. "I thought he loved me. But I'll always be second to the First Order. I don't want to live that way. I deserve love."

Kylo nodded, "I understand. Things change, and Hux is changing too. Without Snoke to guide him, we have to make sure Brendol's madness doesn't repeat. Who knows, this may end up being the straw that breaks the First Order's hold on Armitage Hux."

"You seem different Kylo Ren."

He smiled at her, and pulled a chair next to the bed. "Maybe I am Lyric Bey."

"You've met someone!"

"And she wants to talk with you. She's with your cousin. She's Force sensitive as well. If you hear from someone named 'Rey', don't be afraid to talk with her. She's trying to keep Dameron from flying off on a suicide mission."

"That damn cousin of mine. He's only going to get himself killed if he tries to go against Armi. I've told him for years to stop beating that dead horse, but he really has something against Hux."

"Well the man did put a scar..? Where's the blaster scar?"

She laughed, "I'm vain, what can I say? I had nano-repair shortly after I left two years ago. The scar was too visible for someone on the run."

Ren smiled back. "You were always too beautiful for mere men, Lyric."

Lyric felt the blur of thoughts that meant another round of sedatives were pumping into her veins. "Kylo, before I pass out again, please, tell Armi I'm sorry. Tell him, it wasn't him I was afraid of, it was Snoke. Even if he couldn't pull the trigger, Snoke would always send someone who would."
didn't run from him. I missed him every day."

Then the darkness took her away and it would be another week before she'd surface again.

Kylo clicked his comm device for Hux.

"Yes, Supreme Leader?"

"You might want to watch the vid feed from Lyric's room from a few minutes ago. I think you'll be very interested in what she had to say."

Walking away from her room, Kylo Ren wondered if letting Hux know was the right call or not. In the end, all his plans were beginning to contain three women: his Jedi love, his Warrior mother, and a broken ballerina. He must be going mad.
Chapter Summary

Sometimes the past comes back and smacks us upside the head.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
"Someone's Been Telling You Stories"
Dan Fogelberg

Chapter Three - Uncomfortable Conversations

Hux replayed Lyric's comments a dozen times. She didn't run away from him, but from Snoke and his order for her assassination. Gods he still remembered the sick feeling in his stomach as she'd quivered beneath his grasp, his blaster at her temple. He knew he'd throw up if he pulled the trigger, or put the damn thing in his own mouth. When she'd punched him, he been glad to let her run.

At the core of things, he was weak. Snoke had known the truth, tried to show him the path to the next level, but he'd never make it if killing her was the price. He loved her, he needed her, and now that Snoke was gone, all obstacles to their union were gone. Once she was better, he'd move her into his chambers. With her own assistants, so that she could recuperate while he kept an eye on her.

That brought a frown. The damn pilot would be looking to rescue her first chance they had. Of course, they would wait until her ankle healed. He had that long before he'd need to increase her security. Maybe send her to his family's house on Arkanis. She would need gravity to begin her rehab. She would dance again.

Once she was certified medically, he would marry her and make her his own. She would be a beautiful addition to the family, and their children would be masters of the galaxy. He would adorn her in priceless jewels, silks, whatever she wanted. And at night, he would pleasure her, worship her body, make her his. Most important, she would never leave again.

He put an order in with engineering to redesign the spare room in his suite. It would become Lyric's bedroom, once she was released from intensive care. He also ordered an upgrade to the security on his rooms. No sense protecting her if anyone could break in and take her. Then he put in an order for special clothing. No prisoner garb, but no First Order uniforms either. He thought about the scavenger Ren was obviously involved with. There was something about her tunic and pants that was at the very least comfortable to wear while recuperating.

Once his orders were dispatched and acknowledged, he checked the ship's time. Four hours before
he was scheduled on watch. Time enough to shower, eat, and check in on Lyric again. He disrobed quickly, throwing the discarded uniform in the chute. In the fresher, he turned up the water temp, and let the downpour pound into his back. The stress knots were glad for the relief. He stood there, letting his mind drift back the last time he saw her, the day she fled.

She was racing to catch a ship off of Coruscant, escaping what she thought was certain death at his hands. Still wearing her ball gown from the soiree they’d attended earlier, now stained with blood, hers. He'd come in the front of her building, she'd escaped through the back door, holding the hand of another man. Kir Dameron, Poe's uncle and a smuggler of the worst kind.

That's what threw him at first, another man touching what belonged to him.

"LYRIC!" His scream came from deep in his guts, which were turning to ice water. He'd even fired his blaster in her direction, grazing her cheek.

The look in her eyes at that moment crushed him. Every lie the Resistance fed to her about him was justified in that moment, and he'd never felt worse.

"Don't follow me Armi, I mean it." The flatness in her voice scared him that day, scared him still if he thought about it. "You tried to kill me. Twice. I may not be as smart as you, but I'm smart enough to not stay around for a third time."

"No, Lyric, it's not me. It's Snoke. He's demanding we cut all attachments. Ren as well. He's supposed to kill his father and mother. Brendol is dead, and you were my final test."

The look of horror as she'd climbed into the liner still followed him at night. "Snoke wasn't the one shooting at me, Armi. You were. Good-bye."

"NO!" He'd shot at the ship, tried to stop them from leaving the atmosphere, came damn close to watching her get shot out of the sky by his own men. Then she was gone, and nothing seemed worth it any longer. Worst of all, according to Snoke, he'd failed in his mission. Hux still wore the scars of that beating on his body.

He needed to make sure when she awoke she felt safe with him. That would help rebuild the trust between them. While she was technically a prisoner of war, he'd already begun thinking how they could turn this to the First Order's advantage. Showing them as the rescuers of the famous Lyric Bey, who hadn't run off with some loser to have loser babies with, but who'd been brainwashed by the Resistance, turned against the love of her life to become one of their fanatical followers, then sacrificed as the Resistance leaders fled leaving her to be blown out of the sky by TIE fighters.

Hux would portray himself as the benevolent rescuer turned lover, who saves the beautiful damsel from the evil rebels. Their wedding would be broadcast to every corner of the galaxy, and everyone would know she was his. Briefly he wondered if she would consent to a collar, but realized it would interfere with her dancing. In private however, he would mark and brand her, so no man would dare lay a hand on her.

Of course, she would keep dancing, only this time, for those lucky enough to find favor with the Grand Marshall of the First Order. And she would bear him sons, trueborn sons, to follow in his footsteps as he'd followed in Brendol's. But he'd earn his sons' love with respect and care, not fear and abuse. If there were daughters, beautiful as their mother, they would be sheltered and protected as priceless treasures.

He glanced down to see his cock agreeing with this plan. The thought of Lyric, of being inside her, was almost more than he could think about. Wrapping his hand around his member, Hux began to
recall her scent, a delicious combination of sandalwood and lavender. He thought about how she would taste, not her lips, he'd had those before. No, how would she taste down there? The thought was more than he could hold, and he shuddered as he came over the tile side of the shower.

It had been a long time since Hux had jacked off. Snoke regarded it as a waste of valuable time and passion which could be better channeled into war. Hux knew however, once he was with Lyric, he didn't think he could quit her. For almost four years he'd been searching for her, dreaming of her, wanting her; now she's only steps away, and he can't even control his emotions to do anything more than spend himself on the shower wall. Perhaps Snoke was right, he was pitiful.

He dressed quickly, and once put together made his way to the bridge. Going through the daily routines with his officers, making decisions, charting destinations for the destroyers, soon put him back into the sane, careful groove he needed to perform his job. It was only after all his duties for the day were completed that he allowed his feet to take him down to the med-bay. Every night he came to visit with her, just to be in her presence was soothing.

She was restless, a sign the medic said indicated she might awaken at any time. Gods he was a mess, but he wanted to be the first thing she saw when she awoke. So she would know he was there for her, he would always be there for her. It might be sappy, and sound lovesick, and he knew somewhere in hell Brendol Hux was laughing at his weak son, but he didn't care. This woman was important. He needed her to know how important she was to him.

Suddenly, he heard a faint moan from her lips. Her eyes, those amazing amber cat eyes opened and fell on his. There was a faint crinkle at the corner of her eyes, the only hint of the smile she tried to hide.

"Armi Hux. You sure know how to show a girl a good time. Thanks for the torpedo. I thought about you the whole way back to the ground."

He pressed his lips to her forehead, his fingers lingering on cheekbones. "I didn't know you were there. If I had known, I never would have ordered the strike. I could never knowingly hurt you, Lyric."

"But you have, so many times."

He hung his head over her hand, taking her fingers carefully in his own. "I know. Can you ever forgive me?"

She huffed out a small laugh. "I don't know if I can forgive you. I certainly couldn't forget you, though Maker knows I tried hard enough."

Inside, Hux felt a small piece of his heart fit back together. She couldn't forget him. That had to be something.

"Lyric, I never could have pulled that trigger. I sincerely hope you know that. I, I already knew how much you meant to me by then. That's why Snoke ordered your death. He knew if I loved you, I couldn't blindly follow him anymore. His death has allowed me to see things that were hidden from me. For the first time in years, it's me calling the shots, not Snoke."

A small smile played across her features, wracked with another grimace of pain. He immediately jumped to her aid.

"What do you need? Should I call for the medic? Droid?"

She shook her head. "No, the pain meds come on a schedule, whether I want them or not. I'll be
alright. But before I go away again to the nothing, I need you to know some things."

Hux smiled and took her hand again. "Ren told me. I'm glad you weren't running from me. That would have crushed me."

"It was the hardest thing I've ever done, leaving you. I didn't know Snoke would tell you I died. I could tell the difference in you, in your actions, once you thought I was gone. It was as though you had no soul. I worried for you on a daily basis. When I heard about Starkiller, I almost came to find you."

"I had no heart, Lyric. It's been yours for years. With you gone, there was no reason to prolong my own torment of a life alone."

She smiled, her fingers playing with the restraints on the bed. "You love me so much I have to be tied up like an animal?"

"Well, you are a prisoner of war, a pilot for the loathsome Resistance. It's standard procedure. I can release them if you promise to be good."

"Armi," she rolled her eyes, "I'm recuperating from a broken back and massive internal injuries. I don't think I'll be escaping to anywhere anytime soon."

"So long as you promise," he murmured, using his skeleton code to release the shackles. Once she was able to move her arms, her position became more relaxed. She squirmed about until the pain became too much, then she settled down again. He raised the head of the bed so she could see better. He knew she was happy when a small sigh passed her lips.

When he looked at her again, her amazing amber eyes were fixed on him. "Why am I here, and not dead?"

"Because when I saw you on Yavin 4, I knew fate sent you back now that Snoke is gone. I needed you whole, safe."

"But the First Order will always be your first love."

Hux shook his head. "No, the minute I lost you, the First Order became a way to channel the rage and pain. Now that I know you're alive, that you're here, the First Order can run itself. My first priority is getting you well, the rest can wait. My actions almost killed you. Perhaps I need a little distance from the bridge."

"I wish I could believe you." The plaintive wail in her voice crushed him.

"I know, love. But one day you will. I will make sure you know every day how precious you are to me. I will give you everything, and all I ask is that you love me, and stay with me."

"I need time to heal, Armi. Please understand that I'm not rejecting you. I'm still not sure I'm going to live. If how I feel right now is any example, I might die any moment. But I'm not running anywhere. I'm here, and until you run me away or kill me, I'm not going anywhere until we work this out." Her fingers ran along his face and when he looked in her eyes, he could see the willingness.

"When they release you from the med-bay, I'm having quarters prepared for you in my suite. You'll have your own private space, but where my security detail can keep you safe. Promise me you agree, that you'll stay in my rooms."
The blush that started at her hairline ran all the way down to her toes. "Armi, I still won't sleep with you unless."

Rage flared underneath his calm façade. "And why not?" He spat at her. "Is there some Resistance slime who thinks fucking my woman is the way to a long and happy life?"

"There is no one else, Armi. There never has been. That's another lie Snoke fed you to pull us apart. I never cheated on you, not then, not ever." He watched as she turned deep crimson, "Though it's not any of your business."

"Then why act as Dameron's wife? How did the two of you keep that charade going?"

Fatigue was seeping into her voice. This wasn't how she'd wanted their conversation to go, that was obvious. But Hux couldn't contain the snarling beast inside his stomach that was certain someone else had fucked her, stolen from him the most precious part of her. It ate at him like a cancer.

"Armi, Poe Dameron is my cousin, real blood relative cousin. We've been using this as a cover to keep me safe. If you hadn't crossed up with some resupply ships headed to Yavin, I'd still be hidden."

"Lyric, you really haven't slept with anyone?"

"I really haven't slept with anyone. Haven't had the desire or the time."

The relief that one sentence provided was immense. She did love him, even if she wouldn't say it. How could she, he'd taken so much away from her. She needed to know he'd changed. Perhaps they could go somewhere, just the two of them. Rebuild all the things Snoke had taken from them.

"Armi, I can feel the meds coming on again. I have no idea how long I'm going to be out. Please, I know this is hard but send Poe a message that I'm going to be all right. Tell him what the prognosis is. I know I'm your prisoner, but if you ever felt anything for me, please let the only family I have left know that I'm alive. In return, I will stay in your quarters, and we'll see what happens."

He managed to keep the anger off his face. "Just this once. Now rest, I'll be here when you wake again."

Her eyes were growing heavy. "Thank you, Armi.

*****

Leia called for Poe. Ray was already in the general's office, the look of sympathy on her face unnerving him. "I have a message from the First Order about Lyric." The look on her face told him all he needed to know.

To the traitorous pilot Poe Dameron, from General Armitage Hux:

Greetings. This is to inform you of the capture of your 'wife' Leah Dameron, and to advise her true identity is known to us as well. Lyric Bey suffered severe internal injuries, a broken back, shattered ankle as well as third degree burns during the assault on Yavin 4. Currently she is in intensive care under guard. Once she is released from the med-bay, she will continue her recuperation under my personal care. There will be no negotiations for her release, nor any swap of prisoners. She's mine now, Dameron. Suck on that.

The look on Poe's face was one of abject horror. "Oh my God, he's got her. We have to get her out of there before he can hurt her."
"With Snoke dead, Hux has no reason to hurt her." Leia tried to sound positive.

Poe raised stricken eyes to his second mother. "Leia, you and I both know Hux won't be satisfied until he's destroyed her body and soul. This just proves it."

"Well, at least he sent you a message, to let you know they do have her. That's more than most of their captives get."

"Is she still on Punisher?"

Rey nodded. "They are on long range to the Unknown Regions. Hux wants to be so clear that any possible rescue mission will be difficult as possible. But I think I've discovered her signature. It keeps coming and going as she is in and out of consciousness. Next time I see she's asleep, I'm going to see if we can connect."

"Rey, I'm begging you. Please try and talk with Lyric. I need her to know I'm coming for her. She hasn't been abandoned."

"I promise Poe, and Ben is watching her as well."

"For some reason that doesn't give me the peace you seem to think it should."

"No one is going to let Lyric get hurt."

Rey settled herself onto her bed, Poe sitting quietly across the room. She closed her eyes and looked outward for the glimpse of light she now knew to be Lyric. She was sleeping, drug induced more than likely, and it was easier than she'd thought it would be to slip into the girl's dreams.

"Lyric," she whispered, not wanting to startle.

The girl turned around, and Rey knew why it had been so hard to hid her from the First Order. Her beauty was breathtaking, her skin flawless, her eyes unlike any others. They were almost cat like in their color and features. The Force flowed around her gracefully, like a second skin that moved with the unseen currents of the universe. Her very nature bespoke peace and balance.

"Are you 'Rey'?" She asked cautiously.

"I am."

"Ren told me you would come. My mother told me to never talk to anyone with the Force, unless I knew for certain they wouldn't betray me to our enemies."

"Do you count General Hux as an enemy?"

The girl hesitated. "Armitage and I have a very complex relationship."

Rey smiled. "I know about complex relationships."

Lyric smiled back, and Rey could feel the balm on her soul. No wonder Hux was obsessed with her. She was a human med-kit, filled with the Force in every line of her body. Rey had never seen anything like it.

"Are you with Kylo?"

"That's the big question. I don't know what we are to each other."
"He loves you, I can tell." Lyric touched her hand and showed her the interactions she had with Kylo both before and after Rey entered his life. "You've awakened in Kylo something I though Snoke had destroyed. The Force is strong in both of you."

"How have you stayed hidden all these years? The Force is so strong in you, it's breathtaking."

Lyric bit her lip, and Rey can read the discomfort in every line of her body. "My mother taught me how to hide in the Force, keep my thoughts quiet, and to never let anyone take my blood. We had to hide from my father all my life."

"Who was your father?"

She shook her head. "I never was allowed to hear his name spoken. All I know is he was highly placed in Palpatine's government. Personally, I don't want to know. What good could come from knowing?"

"What about you and the general?"

Lyric began to sway to a tune only she could hear. Rey quickly realized the dancing was the cover her nervousness in talking about her feelings. "The Armitage Hux I met almost four years ago is not the same man who met me when I woke up a few days ago. Since Snoke's murder, he's changing. The fog is lifting, so to speak, and he's learning for the first time how he was used without his consent."

"What do you think he's going to do when you wake up?"

Those amber eyes burned into Rey's hazels with stark clarity. "He's going to make me his, or burn the galaxy down if I refuse."

Unfortunately, Rey knew she was right.
Chapter Summary

Time marches on as Hux waits for Lyric to recuperate, and more people in the galaxy than Poe Dameron have their sights set on separating Lyric Bey from the First Order.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion for this chapter:
'Angels on the Moon'
Thriving Ivory

Chapter Four – Marking Time

It took another fifteen days before the medics would clear Lyric for release from intensive care. Hux had already completed the changes to his rooms, and everything was waiting for her arrival. Since she'd only been on her feet twice in almost seven weeks, he insisted the medics transport her in a levitated chair. That allowed her to sit up and see the immense star destroyer he was commanding, as well as for him to show off that, yes – Lyric Bey was indeed his guest.

He'd already found the ring which he was going to use when he proposed, and he'd decided the day she could walk to him would be the day he did so. The doctors he'd consulted with swore there was no physical reason she shouldn't walk again, and Hux was determined to see her rehab succeed. Not only would she walk, she'd dance again. He'd make it so.

Ren agreed they needed to use her recovery as a positive PR story for the First Order, and already their machine was distributing stories of her abduction by the Resistance, brainwashed by them to denounce the love of her life and used as a pilot to attack those she'd loved and worked with for years. The Coruscant Ballet called and offered their support in anything their most famous ballerina might need, and holos of her career and the horrific images from the crash were making their way to all corners of the galaxy. Sympathy for Lyric and her plight were winning both young leaders of the First Order broad-based support in all corners. The requests for personal interviews was three pages long and growing.

But now, she was in his rooms, exhausted but looking so much better than when he'd first seen her on Yavin after the crash. Or worse, when she'd died just as they landed in the hanger. He'd faced nightmares about that flatline sound. Today, his staff already knew that unless they were under attack, or about to explode, no one was to disturb him for forty-eight hours. Currently they were headed toward the edges of the unexplored regions, supposedly surveying planets for advance bases. There was no reason he should be required to leave his rooms.

Lyric was sitting up in bed, blood pressure alarm on her arm, a brace around her mid-section and a cast on her right leg, facing the transparisteel window, watching the stars flowing by at the speed
of light. While she was still weak and her blood pressure had an annoying habit of bottoming out, her red blood cell count was finally beginning to rise and the bones in her back were mending as well. Only the still healing skin grafts appeared wicked red and fresh. The medics would be coming by several times a day to check on her and to help with physical therapy. But right now, he could see, she was about at the end of her rope.

As a dancer, Lyric had always been high strung. Sitting still was her idea of torture, and with it being forced upon her, he could see her mood sliding down hill rapidly. The doctors he'd consulted with about her injuries all advised him to watch for signs of depression and make sure she didn't have open access to her medications. When Hux insisted she wasn't that type they'd all expressed the same concern: if she sensed her condition as hopeless she could easily make everything worse simply by refusing to participate in her own care.

To that end, Hux had been stockpiling books and holos to keep her entertained. They couldn't keep her sedated for the months it would take to heal, so the two of them were due some crash courses on downtown. To a driven, intense, military man like himself, there was no always something that needed doing. Until her vitals improved, Lyric's most strenuous activity was supposed to be changing position in the bed.

"What can I bring you?" He had to report to the bridge for a few minutes to sign off on the watch but was loathe to leave knowing she was in a bad place. "Anything from the kitchen?"

"A sharp knife to slit my throat." The growl on her lips was self-pity, not anger, so he decided to allow it.

"Lyric, this is going to be a process. I know you're bored. Give me a few minutes to get these final dispatches off, and I'm yours for the next few days." He ran his gloved fingertips along her jawline. "I have some new holovids from Naboo of last year's galas, if you're interested."

She stared at him like he'd grown an additional head.

"There are plenty of books on the datapad, I'm sure there is something that you'll find interesting."

Her eyes rolled at him. "Just go, I'll be fine. You've never gotten to see the temperamental side of a diva. It might change your mind about me when you see how crazy I really get."

He kissed the end of her nose. "Nothing could change my mind about that."

On his way to the bridge, it took him several minutes to realize something was wrong.

They were under attack.

Had Dameron had come for her?

*****

Outside her window the skies were erupting in cannon matter, and X-wing and TIE fighters zoomed around keeping the First Order busy, temporarily busy enough to attempt a rescue for Lyric Bey. But the carrier in the distance looked like no Resistance ship she'd ever seen. Who had Poe roped into his hair brained scheme to rescue her from Punisher? Certainly Leia wouldn't have condoned this mission?

The Stormtrooper who opened the door to her room was no one she'd ever seen before, but she understood when he mentioned Poe's name. It took her another moment to realize he wanted her to go with him.
"I can't walk."

"I know," he insisted. "Dameron told me to carry you. Now come on, we only have a tiny window to get back on the supply ship and out of here."

Lyric shook her head. "He'll never let me go."

"Dameron took that into consideration. In about thirty seconds, Hux is going to receive another phone call from your cousin. That will keep him busy enough to not notice the ship leaving. It will take him twenty minutes to get to the bridge and another twenty to return. We have to go now."

As if to underscore that point, the klaxons blared as the announcement came over the ship, "Battle stations, Battle stations. This is not a drill."

Before she could voice any more resistance, he simply swept her off her feet and headed for the hanger. "By the way, Poe says he loves you." Lyric felt her blood run cold. There was no way Poe would have told someone she didn't know to tell her that. Instead he would have used their code phrase, agreed upon when she was still a child and the possibility of him sending a friend to check on her was high. These people were not Resistance, or at least, not affiliated with General Organa. That left one other who would risk the anger of the First Order to rescue her.

Her father.

They made it almost all the way to the hanger before anyone challenged her supposed rescuer. Seeing Lyric thrown into the arms of a stormtrooper brought the attention of the deck boss, who called the bridge for instructions knowing, as did most of the crew, the injured woman was the general's and there were strict orders not to let her leave. She closed her eyes and tried to calm her racing heart. While she wanted to see her cousin, and be free again, she couldn't honestly say she wanted to leave, especially if these people were aligned with her father.

What she did want to do was explore what was happening with Armitage. Was it possible he could turn back from the road Snoke set him upon? Could he actually love her, as he swore? She knew she still loved him, thought she hated to admit it. Regardless of how she loved her cousin, didn't she owe Armi the chance to win her heart back?

She took a chance, opened her mouth, and screamed at the top of her lungs. "HUX!"
Chapter Summary

Hux has waited just about long enough for Lyric to be his. No one will come between them again.

Smut ahead (or at least my first attempt at writing smut). Let me know what you think!

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'It Will Rain'
Bruno Mars

Chapter Five - Mine

Hux was coming through the hanger doors, screaming instructions to his men when he heard his name. Even at a distance she could see the anger in his eyes as he walked toward them, his hands in the air to show them empty. Her would be rescuer pulled his blaster and trained it on Lyric's chest.

"Stop there, or I'll fire!"

Armitage took a deep breath, she could tell he was only barely holding it together by the strength in their joined eyes. She nodded at him, to let him know she was alright with whatever he had to do to keep her on the ship. He kept moving slowly forward. "If you want to live another minute, you need to put Ms. Bey down and step back now."

"She's leaving with me."

Hux's face was as red as his hair, shouting, "SHE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE. SHE'S BADLY INJURED!"

"All the more reason for her to come back with us. Why should she stay with the people who put her in this condition? How did it feel, shooting her down?"

The thin smile Armitage showed was a dangerous sign, she knew that. It reminded her of an apex predator just before the fatal attack. She tried to warn the stranger holding her. "He's going to kill you."

"Not while I hold you he won't."

The blaster shot through the trooper's head surprised only the trooper, coming from one of the snipers positioned around the deck. Lyric tried to brace herself to hit the hard durasteel, but Hux managed to get underneath her just in time. He tightened his arms around her as the rest of the
supply ship crew were eliminated. She looked up into his face and was amazed to see fear in those ice blue eyes she knew so well and reached up to softly wipe away a tear on his cheek.

He grabbed her wrist and pulled her tight to his chest. "Gods Lyric, he almost took you."

"I don't know who he was, I didn't ask to be rescued. I don't even think they are Resistance. Something seemed off about them."

"I know. Unfortunately, some people don't understand you aren't coming back to the Resistance."

This time Hux carried her back to their rooms. Once inside, he locked the doors, removed his cape and gloves, then he reset the security program to include his bio signature and nothing else. He returned to Lyric.

She was sitting on the settee, running her hands through her hair and quietly crying.

"What's wrong?" He crossed to her side, pulling her into the safety of his arms.

"They'll never accept us together, Armi."

"The Resistance? Fuck them. We belong together, and I'll never let you go again."

"Nor the First Order, nor your family. To them I'll always be Resistance scum."

He shook his head. "Once you return to the ballet, they'll forget this ever happened. You'll be ensconced on Coruscant, adored and loved and safe. No one will bother us again."

They sat there quietly for a moment, just being. Finally Lyric broke the silence.

"I think I'd like to go to bed now."

He carried her to her bedroom. He carefully undressed her, mindful of the stitches and removing the braces that comprised her body at this point in her recovery. Once she was naked, he carried her to the fresher, stripping down himself. The water was not too hard, more of a rain shower on Arkanis, and she leaned her under the water as he held her steady. He poured the shampoo into his hand and began to softly wash the silky raven tresses, mindful of the stitches along her lower hair line and neck. Rinsing the suds out, he began to kiss along her skin, starting at the back of her neck and working his way up to her lips as his hands swept around to cup her breasts.

"Armi. ."

"The doctor said so long as your blood pressure doesn't freak out, some activity would be alright."

Her face turned beet red and she spun around to face him.

"I cannot believe you spoke to the doctor about creating a sex life."

Hux looked deeply into her eyes, amber pools into which he freely dove, taking a risk by telling her his shameful truth. "Don't mistake any reluctance to make you mine before now for lack of interest. As soon as you're cleared medically, I will completely claim you as I should have years ago. When you were younger though, I promised Madam Izzereah I wouldn't bed you until maturity. It almost drove us both insane. I love you, and I want to be inside you so bad it's a physical ache in my soul. After what just happened, I need this, we need this. Otherwise I may finally lose my mind."

She looked at him, unable to formulate the words she wanted to say. Finally, she just nodded her
consent. He stood beside the bed, keeping eye contact with her the entire time. They were already further than they'd ever been together before, and Hux knew he wouldn't be able to stop himself if she were to suddenly say stop. When she'd left, part of him still considered her a child, lovely yet something to be revered. Now Lyric was definitely a woman, with a woman's curves and essence. His cock was half hard in moments.

He helped adjust her back against the pillows, kissing her deeply, connecting to the deep power that was Lyric's Force signature and warming his broken soul in waves of love. After a moment, he felt her relaxing as the warmth of their bodies blended together, skin to skin, overcoming her natural shyness and showing a spark of the old Lyric. Her hands ran lightly over his shoulders, and down the slope of his back toward his ass. He pulled her into the crook of his arm, letting his free hand wander over her flawless skin. He chuckled at the goosebumps he could feel on her smooth flesh.

"Oh, gods you are so beautiful." He murmured to her neck as his lips ran over her throat and down to her breasts. First one and then the other, he licked her nipples with his tongue, nipping with his teeth until they stood peaked and slick with his saliva. "I've dreamed about your breasts for years."

"They're smaller now. That happens when you don't eat real food for a couple of months."

"Shh, you're perfect," he murmured to her skin. "Just let me love you."

Her fingernails ran up his spine, causing him to groan with need. Returning his mouth to her nipples, he slid his free hand down her stomach, across the smoothness of her skin and between her folds. She was wet, and growing more so by the minute. He circled his thumb around her clit, laughing to himself as her hips bucked upward and she gasp in need.

"I've wanted to taste you for so long."

His lips rained kisses down her torso until he slid his teeth onto her clit, then sucked gently before biting again harder. He slid one finger down her slit and into her warmth. He'd never felt a cunt so tight before, but then he'd never been with a virgin before. Hux had specific tastes that most virgins wouldn't tolerate, however he'd also never been in love before. For her first time, and until she was comfortable with him, he was willing to calm down his drives to make certain her needs were met. There was time enough for play once she was well. After all, they had forever. Trust was the main thing now.

Soon her breath came in gasps, and her fingers grasp his hair, tightly. He looked up at her face, amazed at the flush of her cheeks and her lips were parted and glistening. He slid another finger into her warmth, working both into the third knuckle before her muscles stopped him as his tongue twirled circles around her clit. He groaned, as she came apart underneath him.

Once she returned to earth, he moved up to kiss her, noting that she didn't seem averse to the taste of herself on his lips. Splitting her thighs wider with his hands, he looked in her eyes to see how she was doing. There was only a blissed out expression he quietly patted himself on the back for bringing to her face.

"Are you sure, Lyric? I don't want this to be wrong."

"I've never been more certain of anything in my life."

"I can't promise it won't hurt, but I'll try."

She smiled at him, running her fingers across his lips. "I trust you."
Hux didn't think he could get any harder, but when she said that, he felt he could pound nails through durasteel. He placed the head of his cock against her, pressing inside steadily while keeping his eyes on her own. He saw her sharp inhale, felt the resistance inside and felt it give way, along with the rush of heat he knew was blood. Only when she nodded would he begin to move within her.

Gods she was tight. There was no way he'd last too long in this warmth, but at least he'd accomplished what he'd planned for so long. She was finally his. There would be time to teach her more about herself and what his body could make hers do once she healed. For now, this was more than enough. No one could take her from him now.

Her eyes closed, as her hands ran over his back and hips, as she rose to meet his slow thrusts. He could feel her cunt fluttering around him as she climbed to another pinnacle and hoped he could prolong his own. He wanted her pliant and happy with her decision to stay with him. Because if she ever left, he'd never survive.

Her legs tightened around his waist, and he thought he'd died and gone to heaven. He could feel his climax building, knew he would paint her insides with his seed and nothing had been done yet to prevent her from catching with his child. That thought sent him over the edge, pounding into her briefly before remembering her back. He spilled himself inside and held her protectively as she curled herself into his arms and fell asleep, while he crowed inside over the blood on her thighs and his cock. He'd found heaven, and as she slept, he planned for the future.

When Lyric awoke several hours later, he carried her to the fresher, this time cleaning her lower body, while assuring of his love with every kiss. Carefully they re-bandaged her wounds, did a few of the stretching exercises the medic left behind, then made love again, a towel on the sheets to prevent more mess. As Lyric came the last time, he heard her murmur "I think I love you" before she returned to sleep.

Nude, Hux carefully stood from the bed, trying hard not to wake her and walked over to the window, watching the galaxy speed by. For the first time since the Snoke fell, he felt strong, confident in what he wanted. Those Resistance scum had taken her from him. Twice. It was time to get with Kylo Ren.

The Resistance had to end. Now.
Lyric decided physical therapy might be the straw that caused her to steal Ren's light saber and decapitate her overly helpful general.

"Just a few more steps, love. You can make it."

Hux stood on the other end of the room, arms outstretched for her to walk into. It'd been three months since she'd been on her feet without support from braces and air casts. These were her first steps and already she was willing to become chair bound. After all, she didn't need to dance again, did she?

Her body hurt. Her back hurt. Her ankle screamed fire. Her head was woozy. There was a ringing in her ears that probably meant she was about to pass out, and the shattered ankle refused to move no matter how much she thought about it. This had to be without a doubt, the worst day she's ever had. And Armitage had the gall to smile at her.

Grinding her teeth to keep from screaming out loud, she finally managed the three steps the medics required her to complete for this first session, then three more just because that's who she was, and by the time Hux wrapped his arms around her, she was shaking and sweating from the strain of walking. Only her ability to draw on the Force kept her upright, and right now that hold was tenuous at best. There's too much exhaustion to focus on the positives.

Her thoughts were crowded with too much emotion. She knew what Hux did, the message he sent to Poe, and she wasn't happy. But short of telling him about her Force sensitivity there's no way to broach the subject without betraying Ren and others, especially herself. Her relationship with Hux was different, she knew that. But it wasn't for him to rub it in her family's face, just as she'd refused to meet his family until they stopped calling her the 'Resistance whore'.

How the hell did she fall in love with a First Order officer? That certainly hadn't been the plan when she'd met him, that magical night. Sixteen years old and wiser than most of her older rivals,
the first thing that drew her to him were his eyes. Such an ice blue with unmatched intensity, they had pulled her across the room to learn more about the man they belonged to. Then once they began speaking, they discovered they had quite a bit in common, including having fathers who were not married to their mothers. At least Hux knew who his was. Hers was still a shadowy menace on the edges of her memory.

Although not many people knew about them, they'd been happy. Truly happy, while Hux was stationed on Coruscant as attaché to the council. He even agreed to her stipulation of no sex, considering her age. Although an emancipated teenager, Hux was almost thirteen years her senior. Both were rising stars in their respective careers and she didn't know what future there was with a man born and raised to rule the stars. But Snoke allowed them almost eleven months of bliss before calling his military protégé home to receive his final training instructions: to kill Lyric Bey and free himself from the most binding of emotional attachments – love.

When she closed her eyes, no matter how tender he might be at this moment, the image of him with that blaster to her temple always dominated them all. The picture was seared behind her eyes and never varied. The only saving grace, as it was that day, were the tears pouring from those icy blue eyes as he attempted to explain what was happening. Luckily Uncle Kir had arrived to get her out of the city and into hiding.

Four weeks later she was gone, her bank accounts transferred into a morass of financial transactions, her apartment empty, everything abandoned. After leaving with Kir, she'd tried to send a final message to Hux, but all that came out were tears, so she'd just sunk lower and lower into her depression until she'd managed to make Poe furious. He'd pulled her from a junker's scow in the Outer Rim and taken her to General Organa. That had been her entrance to the life she'd come to enjoy, to flying, her second love.

Now, struggling to get in and out of her med-chair, she wondered if she'd ever fly again. It was the most amazing rush, so different from her emotions where dance was concerned. Flying allowed her to let the Force flow through her into the movement of the air around of the fighter, which made her slippery to target. But Hux would never let her get back into a fighter, she knew that. She'd seen the look on his face when he'd realized she was the pilot they'd taken down above Yavin. He'd been paralyzed thinking how close she'd come to dying.

"What are you thinking about, love?" His voice was low and insistent in her ear. The warm air brought shivers to her as her skin pebbled.

"Just wondering how I got to here from Coruscant. From ballerina to pilot to cripple must be the strangest trajectory I've ever heard of. Armi, I have a question. If Snoke hadn't called you back for new orders, what would have happened to us?"

He frowned at the question. "What do you mean?"

"If you hadn't tried to blast my head off, would you have married me? Turned against your Supreme Leader and forged a new path in the world? Or would I have been left alone while duty took you away?"

He crossed his arms across his chest and leaned against the wall. "I've never thought about it. Once you disappeared, the only thing that mattered was to make sure you were safe, and not in Snoke's hands. I couldn't have stood by if he'd tried to do to you what I've seen him do to Ren, or his scavenger girl."

Lyric smiled. "Ren loves that girl, you know that don't you? Both of Snoke's men in love with Resistance scum. Whatever is the First Order coming to?"
They entered their quarters, and Hux helped her into the shower. They had progressed from him bathing her, to him in the room while she showered. He was trying to make her do more on her own as part of her rehab. He did always wait with a warm towel to scoop her up and carry her off to bed. On nights when Hux had nothing to do, they slept in his bed. If he was due on duty, or was working in his office, then she would return to her own rooms.

He hadn't pushed to make love again. It seemed now that he knew, proof positive, that he was Lyric's first, he was willing to wait. The past few weeks, he'd let her body alone while bones knit and organs repaired themselves, apparently content to feel her arms around him at night or to guide her fingers to his stiffness, showing her how to use those graceful fingers and mouth to tease him to release. Hux seemed willing to withhold until she was doing better.

Once settled into bed she brought up her questions again. "Would you have married me before? Risked Snoke's wrath, or your father's disapproval?"

"I like to think I would have, but it's only now that I realize how strong Snoke had both Ren and myself wrapped in his iron realities. That's why my love for you was so dangerous. If I had stayed with you, loved you, married you, then his master plan would have been for nothing, because one-half of his grip on the galaxy would have suddenly had something more important. While Snoke planned for many contingencies, he never assumed love was a force to be reckoned with. His arrogance ended up killing him, when he asked Ren to end his scavenger."

"Armi?"

"Yes love?"

"Do you have an implant?"

"What kind of implant?"

Her blush told him what she was thinking about. "Oh, that kind. No love, I don't." He examined her face carefully. "Does that upset you?"

"It upsets me you wouldn't think to discuss that fact before coming inside me."

"The doctors don't think your system will return to normal for months. They were reluctant to flood your body with anything other than medically required drugs for a few months and I agreed. I should have spoken to you, but you know I've always wanted children. We've spoken of this before."

He was alarmed to see real anger flash across her eyes.

"You might have mentioned the risks to me before, instead of leading me to believe things were taken care of."

While Hux didn't mind Lyric having a feisty spirit and a quick mind, he wasn't about to have her question his decisions. Ever. It was late, and she needed her rest, as he did as well. He rubbed his eyes and tried to explain to her again what had been decided.

"That's the problem," she stormed, pushing her finger in his chest. "It's always been the problem. You never ask my permission, you just barrel on with what you want, never taking my wants or needs into consideration. I've broken my back for gods' sake. I don't need to get pregnant."

Hux stood and tried to count to ten before answering. When that didn't help, he went on to twenty. "Lyric, no one understands better than me how fragile your body is at this time. But I will not put
anything else into your system until we can start weaning you off some of the stronger drugs. It's not good for you. In case you hadn't noticed, it's not like we're fucking every day."

She narrowed her eyes and attacked. He wasn't surprised, he'd actually expected her to try something as soon as she awoke. But it was only now, as the frustration of a serious injury and lengthy, painful rehab began to hit home, that her rage came to a head.

She punched the shit out of him. The left jab came out of nowhere, and he was amazed at the power behind it. He could see stars, and it was only years of hiding his true self from his father and Snoke, that allowed him to not strike her back. Deep inside, Hux was pleased she could throw a punch. It showed him she could defend herself long enough for him to save herself, should the need arise. On the other hand, he was going to have a hell of a black eye.

"You're upset. Perhaps you should go on to bed. I have work to do tonight." He strode to the door before he did something he knew he would regret.

The cold streaming from her eyes broke his heart.

"Don't expect to find my door open any time soon."

He didn't.

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"Lyric?" The voice in her mind was soft, almost apologetic at having to disturb her.

"Rey?"

"I'm sorry I've been away. Riding herd on your cousin is becoming a full-time job. He doesn't understand we can't just go flying in and scoop you up from Punisher. Leia's been forced to ground him until further notice."

Lyric laughed heartily. "Poe can be an emotional hand full. I don't envy any of you having to deal with him right now. But let him know I started walking lessons today. The docs aren't talking but I can tell everyone is concerned about the ankle, but my back is getting stronger."

"He'll be happy to hear that."

Rey looked around. "Where are we?"

"This is my room, within Armi's quarters. I have my own rooms, fresher, wardrobe, and we share the kitchen and living room. It's not bad. Better than my quarters with the Resistance, but don't tell Poe I said that. It would crush him."

"How are things with Hux?"

Lyric began swaying and dancing, avoiding questions she'd rather not answer.

"Is it possible to love the right person at the wrong time?"

"I don't think I'm the right person to ask."

"No, you're absolutely the right one. How do you love Kylo Ren, knowing what he's done? You saw Kylo kill his father. Hux held a blaster to my temple and told me he loved me but had to kill me. How sick am I that I want to spend my life with a man who held a blaster to my head?"
"But it wasn't Hux," Rey implored, "just like it wasn't Ben. Snoke wrapped their minds in his twisted games, pitting them against each other. Ben is working to make things right, and since you returned Hux has abandoned crushing the Resistance. Don't you see? The Force is guiding things, correcting the errors of the past. You're a part of that correction, Lyric. Don't you know how special you are?"

"Rey, I've been hiding for so long. It's going to take some time before I feel a part of the Force again. Is it selfish of me to want to just heal? For right now, I'd just like to take care of me."

Rey threw her arms around the thinner woman. "You can do whatever you'd like, just keep this link open, in case you need me. I'll let Leia and Poe know what you want, request they back off until you've finished recuperating. Be strong in the Force, Lyric Bey, and know that Ben will keep Hux from doing you any physical harm."

There were tears in the amber eyes that refused to meet her hazel ones. "The mental pain is worse."
Invisible Boundaries

Chapter Summary

A Force-derived migraine, and a proposal.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'The Only Exception'
Paramore

Chapter Seven – Invisible Boundaries

For three days they avoided each other. She would stay in her room unless he was elsewhere. He pulled extra shifts on the bridge, claiming to be interested in mineral scanning reports, when actually Hux was trying to figure out how to apologize. She took to staring out the window and not eating. He didn't sleep. Both were miserable.

Three nights later, there was a knock at her door. Lyric tried to open her eyes, but the grueling physical therapy sessions kept her exhausted. The knock came again, more insistent this time. With a lurch, she stood and wobbled over to the panel. When it opened, Hux stood in the hall, dressing gown and sleeping pants, hands clasp behind his back.

"I wanted to see if you were alright."

"I'm asleep. I'm very tired, Armitage."

"I know."

He stood there shifting his weight from one foot to the other.

She sighed. "Did you want something else?"

"Will you come to my bed? Just to sleep, nothing more."

She nodded, limped out her door, leaning on the wall as they went along. When he tried to carry her, she pushed him away.

"I'll never get better if you don't let me push myself."

"It's hard watching you in pain."

"Good thing you never saw rehearsals for new performances. I've danced until my feet would bleed."
He shook his head. "You make it look so effortless."

"That's called practice."

At the door to his room, he finally could stand it no more, and in one fluid motion swept her up and into the bed. Soon they were both situated and settling down for the night. Lyric felt a strange pull in the back of her mind, different from Kylo or Rey. It was painful, almost like a hot knife trying to slide in between her memories.

She sat up in bed, her hands pressed to her temples as a scream erupted from her throat. Hux sat up, looking around the room for the danger. Seconds later, there was a pounding on the living room door. He ran to open it, admitting Ren, who apparently felt Lyric's distress and responded to the agony in her tone.

Ren placed his hands on hers, muttering quietly all the while. Slowly the pain receded, not disappearing but no longer intruding into her mind with white pain. As her vision cleared, she looked at Kylo's brown eyes for understanding.

"I'm not sure who that was," Ren confessed. "I don't recognize the signature, but it wasn't friendly. Who do you know that might be Force sensitive?"

Lyric shook her head, tears streaming unchecked from the sudden migraine. "The only other I knew of was my father."

Kylo Ren and Hux shared a closed look between them. She knew what they were thinking. The only thing she or anyone knew about her father was he was an evil man who managed to escape the cleansing after the fall of Palpatine. Which also meant there was a chance he was living in plain sight, parading as a supporter of the First Order, all the while still worshiping the Sith.

Kylo took her hand and spoke softly, but she heard the underlying urgency in his voice. "I need to look in your memories, see if we can find any clue to who this might be."

"No." Her face closed shut.

"Love, be honest. It's time we discovered who this presence might be. You shouldn't be frightened in your own bed." Hux moved to sit beside her, taking her other hand in his. "If Ren can ease the nightmares, let him."

"No one can ease my nightmares," she intoned blankly. "Besides, I don't want anyone else digging around in my head. Me and my own voices are more than enough inside there at one time."

Kylo stared deeply into her eyes, and she could hear him in her thoughts.

"Why do you not want to know?"

"Because it could kill me, and everyone around me, this secret."

"Will you tell Rey?"

"Not willingly."

In frustration he turned to Hux. "She doesn't want to cooperate. I dare not force her, you know what that can do."

"Yes, unfortunately, all too well."
Satisfied she was fine for the moment, Kylo backed off. But as he left the room, he grabbed Hux's sleeve and motioned for him to step out with him. Once in the hall, he confessed his suspicions to the worried general.

"I think her father was an apprentice to either Palpatine or Darth Tyranus."

"How can you tell?"

"Something about the rage I can sense, not hers but one that she taps into when angry. The age would be about right. Ciara Bey told her daughter that the rapist who was her father used the Force to make her submit to him. Also, there are her eyes. Eyes like that don't occur in many human families and none of the other Beys have them. There are a few possible candidates, but I'll need to do more research. Is her DNA pattern in the computer?"

Hux nodded. "I'll send you the access routing. What would a former apprentice of the Emperor want with a ballerina?"

The Dark Jedi studied the shorter general with a careful expression. "I don't know if she wants me to let you know this, but Lyric is Force sensitive, and in answer to your question, not the kind who would Force-choke anyone. Her connection to the Force is harder to quantify. But, what if fanatics were playing a long game, or providing a safety net should anything happen once they could no longer pull all the strings? A daughter would be the perfect child to carry on their plans. Has anyone even been to Serreno recently?"

Hux's mouth twisted when the implications hit him. "Ren, nothing can happen to her. Especially now that I've finally gotten her back."

The taller man nodded. "We'll keep her safe."

Nodding at each other in agreement, Hux returned to Lyric, locking the doors and turning all the lights off. When he reached the bedroom door, he stood and just looked at her for a long moment. She was asleep, curled on her side, waiting for him to join her. Her black hair was spread around the pillow like a cloud, and her skin was so pale he could see the veins underneath the skin.

He tried to climb back in bed without disturbing her, but it wasn't to be.

"Armi?"

"Yes love?"

"I'm scared."

"I will protect you from anything and anyone who dares to think they can hurt you. And where I can't protect you, Ren will. Don't worry. Just rest."

She lifted her face to his, and in the artificial glow of the stars as they sped by, her eyes looked luminous, more feline than human. The tears glistening on her face were slowing at last, and there was raw pain in her gaze.

"I'm trying so hard not to love you."

He frowned. "That makes no sense."

She shifted tactics. "Once I can walk again, once I dance again, where do we go from there? I can't live in a star destroyer, and a general can't lead from Coruscant. How do we stay together?"
He stood up and walked over to his wall safe. Spinning the dials, he talked over his shoulder. "I've been thinking about this problem since we retrieved you from Yavin 4. If you wanted, I would ask Ren for a duty transfer, go back to the political side of the First Order and let my second take more of the day to day operations."

She cocked her head. "You would give up what you've worked so hard and so long to build? I can't ask that of you."

Returning to the bed with a small box, he made sure she was looking him square in the eyes. "I have no desire to rule the galaxy any longer, if you aren't by my side. I tried it without you; the result wasn't beneficial for anyone. Besides, the rest is all to provide for whatever you want, whatever you desire. I love you, with every fiber of my being and have for a long time. I want to make you my wife."

The box opened as he knelt on the bed beside her. It was the ring he'd had designed for her. Three broad strands of gold: one red, one yellow, and one white, braided together with a large ice blue sapphire similar in color to his eyes, in a princess cut. It was delicate and ethereal and when he placed it upon her finger, he felt a sharp pang in his chest as another part of his shattered soul repaired itself. He'd never felt as invincible as he did at that moment.

Hux wrapped his arms around her, pulling her close as his lips nudged against hers. Hers were soft, flavored with a splash of salt from her tears and he felt time standing still for this moment, this perfect moment, and he reveled in it. Throwing his robe on the floor, he smoothed one hand down her throat to the hollow between her breasts. Her heartbeat, so precious to him since that day on the med-evac from Yavin, when it had stopped and started more times then he'd been prepared to handle. Now it fluttered under his fingers, his forever more, and he savored the first contentment he'd allowed himself in many years.

With the back brace gone, and a walking cast on her ankle, all that remained were the healing burns and gashes that marred the porcelain perfection of her skin. She was still a little too thin, but the empty spaces between her ribs was lessening with each meal. Still smaller breasts than he remembered, but beautiful no matter the size. And those perfect legs, almost as long as his own, muscles taunt under that perfect skin.

"I want you so much."

She smiled at him, her answer in the wicked glimmer of her eyes. He quickly shed his sleeping pants, and pulled her on top on him, making her use some of the leg muscles that had atrophied over the months she'd spent in bacta tanks and medical beds. He ran his hands up her sides and across her back taking care to avoid the sensitive still-healing baby skin grafted on her burns, and the giant healing incision down her spine. When she nodded her consent, he slid his hand between their bodies, checking to make sure she was ready for him. He guided his cock into that heated tightness, letting her sink down at her own pace, letting her learn what immense pleasure their bodies could bring each other. Her hands leaned on his chest, and he grabbed gently onto her hips, biting his lip to keep his control focused.

It took a few tries before they got the movement right, but once they did, it was soul-filling. Like someone had taken all their needs and wants and pulled them together into their own personal solar
They were binary stars revolving around each other, neither one as strong alone as they were together. The bond between them grew everyday he allowed himself to open up and let her infectious warmth bathe his soul. He watched the universe crashing in her eyes and knew this was his true destiny.

When she indicated her hips tiring, he rolled them over, still letting her languid pace continue in their movements. He angled his hips slightly and felt the jerk of her hips and added that in varied amounts to build her pleasure. Lyric's breathing became heavier with a panting need to release, and a thin sheen lay over both their bodies. The only sounds in the room beside the white noise of a starship moving through space, were the squish of their sweaty bodies and the moans and sighs they coaxed from each other every moment. Time became worthless, as eternity was found in the eyes of each other, and when he felt her walls beginning to tremble around his cock, it took every bit of self-control he possessed to postpone his own ending to indulge hers first.

They came together, both crying the other's name as if it were a lifeline they needed to return to themselves. Once Hux softened and shifted off her, he pulled Lyric to his chest, arms around her waist, legs entwined. Totally spent at last, they slept.
Chapter Summary

Nightmares and medical emergencies continue to plague Lyric as Punisher heads deeper into the galaxy.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Bring Me to Life''
Evanescense

Chapter Eight – Code Blue

She dreamed of a red planet. The landscape was dust and rocks, with no life visible in any direction. When she glanced at the dome of space above her, none of the stars were familiar. The lifelessness around her was alien and frightening, as she could feel through the Force that life once filled this planet, teeming in oceans and on landmasses, but something happened to strip everything away in a matter of moments.

There was a man, on the horizon. She could see his cape, billowing in a wind that hadn't scoured the surface in eons. Something about him set her teeth on edge. Every nerve in her body said run, but her feet were stuck. Fear began to creep up her spine, tingles making her senses hyperalert. She could see the Force around her pulling tight, preparing to protect her from this stranger.

Then he was standing before her. The first thing she noticed was his eyes. They were her eyes, that bright amber found nowhere else except in her own face. His hair was silver, but his beard still had jet black mixed in the grey. A smile crossed his face, and the fear wrapped around her brain, screaming to flee. But as she gathered her muscle to move, he waved in her direction, Force freezing her in place.

"Let me look at you." His voice was deep, reminding her of someone but she couldn't remember where she'd heard it before. "You've grown so much since I last saw you. Closing night, the grand ballet just before you ran off and left it all behind to be a Resistance fighter."

"Who are you?" She hated how weak her voice sounded, but couldn't move past her fear to say anything more.

"Who did your mother tell you was your father?"

"No one. She died with me never knowing the truth."

"Interesting. What did you think of that?"
Lyric shrugged dispassionately. "If he was supposed to be a part of my life he would have been. I've never missed one."

"What if I were your father?"

Her eyes raked him up and down. "And?"

He laughed, a razor over her shredded nerves. "You've been on your own a long time, haven't you? How young when Ciara died?"

"I'd been on my own long before that as she spent most of her time trying to keep me hidden from everyone, including her own madness."

"And Dameron? How did he handle your secret?"

"He doesn't know who my father is either."

That laugh again. "Not that one. The other. The Force and what you are?"

"And what am I supposed to be?"

The man changed directions with his questions. "Where are you? We must rescue you."

"I don't want to be rescued."

"But you need to understand your place in what is coming."

"What's coming?"

His smile was deader than the planet on which they were standing. "Retribution."

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Lyric awoke covered in sweat, her vision filled with images of the man with amber eyes and strange words. Hux was still asleep, and she relaxed looking at his features now softened and at peace. His hair was messy, and a light ginger fuzz graced his cheeks and jaw. One arm was thrown over her, the other tucked under his pillow. She reached out and gently touched his cheek. He looked so young, so carefree, not at all the uptight prick she'd seen before as he commanded the First Order's massive military machine.

She carefully extracted herself from his arm and rose slowly to let her blood pressure adjust so she wouldn't pass out. Once she was certain she wouldn't fall, she crept out of Hux's bedroom and into the living area. The night lights were motion driven, keeping her from groping in the dark and possibly waking him.

The stars were stationary outside the giant window in the living room, and she realized they were above a planet, along with several other First Order ships. A supply station, she guessed. Otherwise she had no idea where they might be, and that was the way she wanted it. She glanced down at her engagement ring, twinkling on her finger with its own internal light. For the moment, all she wanted was to float along on her denial and recuperate from her injuries.

No First Order, no Resistance, no Poe, no being forced to question everything she'd been told, it felt wonderful. It was the safest she'd felt since the moment Kir Dameron had taken her away from Coruscant and a blaster with her name on it. Which was crazy, considering the one holding the damn blaster now slept mere feet from her. Somewhere he'd changed, and she could only hope
Snoke's absence was the reason behind it.

For the first time since she'd awakened from the bacta tank, Lyric didn't want to plan further ahead than the next moment, and for someone who planned their life and career meticulously, it was a chaotic and freeing decision. She didn't know how long she stood there, just staring out at the stars, when she felt strong arms slid around her waist, pulling her gently back against his bare chest.

"You're freezing, love. Come back to bed." He kissed the back of her neck gently as he rubbed his hands across her breasts and stomach. "I miss you."

She threw one arm back and around his neck, pulling his head where she could kiss him, deep and full. He reached around and untied her nightgown at the neck. Loose, the flimsy material slid effortlessly down her body, leaving her standing in the transparasteel window, naked and bathed in starlight. She looked up into his eyes, and noticed they were black with desire.

He turned her face to the window, kissing her neck as he slid one hand down the smooth skin of her stomach and lower to the cleft between her thighs. She gasped with surprise, then pushed back to grind her ass against his groin. He moaned against her skin as he used his fingers to separate her folds, circle her sweet nub, press his fingers into her awakening dampness.

The transparasteel felt cold against the heat in her skin, but all she desired was the press of his cock against her, the slickness his fingers were thrusting into, and the spreading fire in her skin.

"You are perfection." His teeth latched onto the tendon of her neck and bit down. Not hard enough to draw blood, but enough he heard the sharp inhale of her breath, felt her clamp down on his fingers just before flooding them with fresh moisture.

She allowed him to spread her legs as he pressed into her, using the window and his own strength to pull her lightly off the floor as he slid through her tightness, until the head of his cock pressed against her cervix. He pushed gently between her shoulder blades, pining her to the window as he pulled back only to slide into her again and again. The relentless pressure and need built inside until it consumed her. She needed him, needed more.

"Armi," she panted, need making her whine as he drove her higher and higher with each thrust. "I, I..need..need..." She couldn't finish the sentence, couldn't articulate what she was searching for, but when his fingers reached again for her clit while his teeth ground on her neck, it pushed her over the edge and she exploded in all directions with abandon.

When she attempted to gather her thoughts again, she felt his thighs tighten behind her ass, and his breathing hitch. He pinched hard on her clit and she fell apart again, feeling his heat spraying against her walls, as she fluttered and clenched him inside her, never wanting to let him leave.

Her legs were weak, and when he pulled out, he gathered her in his arms and carried her back to their bed. He chuckled at the sight of his seed leaking into her reddish black curls and collected it on his fingertips to press gently back into her overly sensitive cunt. That caused small aftershocks that made him smile as she bucked and squirmed underneath him.

As they drifted back to sleep for a while, Lyric was certain of one thing. No matter what the rest of the universe felt, beside Armitage Hux was where the Force meant for her to belong.

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Unseen by either Lyric or Hux, a shadowy figure slipped from behind the rigging on the refueling dock, staring up at the window where just moments before, anyone who'd care to look would have
seen the leader of the First Order's military fucking the brains out of a dark-haired woman. While all he could tell was she was tall and beautiful, there was nothing to prove it was the girl he was searching for.

Moving on, he finished up his shift, had lunch, made his way around the fuel port until he was sure no one way paying him any attention. Then he pulled out a small communication device, loaded the video he'd made, along with the date and time stamps, and forwarded it all to his handler. When finished he moved on, knowing it could days before he received an answer.

He smiled to himself when he thought about the hell that was about to descend on the red haired general. The Master would be most unhappy to find out she'd been touched. At least it wasn't some Resistance nobody like that cousin of hers. But still, the bounty was for the girl 'alive and unspoiled'. It would require some negotiation but certainly the 'alive' part was the most important.

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Leia called for Rey when the video was intercepted.

"What do I tell Poe now?"

Rey saw the window of a star destroyer, with a woman in a long white nightgown standing against it looking at the stars. A few moments later she was joined by who she recognized to be Armitage Hux, and from that point on, Rey's face blushed too much to watch the entire vid.

"Lyric told you she was in love with Hux, correct?"

Nodding, Rey looked Leia square in the eyes. "She wanted to be left alone to make her own decisions, her own choices, and I have to agree. It's her life. Let her follow her heart and see what happens."

"And what do we tell Poe when I tell him we aren't going to rescue her from the First Order until she requests it?"

"Just like that. If he loves her, he'll want her to be happy, right?"

Leia laughed loudly. "Poe will never accept that Armitage Hux makes Lyric happy. Just as Finn will never accept you and Ben."

Rey blushed again, looking at her feet. "The universe doesn't make sense much of the time."

"No, but that doesn't mean we should seek to change things before we know if they are going to work. Lyric Bey might be the dynamite needed to blow General Hux right out of his neat and tidy universe. That idea, I hate to confess, makes me very happy."

"I'll let Ben and Lyric know that we're tabling any rescue until she requests extraction. Otherwise, General Organa, I leave it to you to let our pilot know the decision."

Leia rolled her eyes. "Thanks for nothing."

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"You sent for me General?" Poe showed up about five minutes after she requested him.

"Poe, we've had someone send us a vid, showing who we think is Lyric. We're not sure where this was made, or when, or even who sent it to us. So take what you are seeing what a grain of salt, all
Leia sat back and watched his face light up as the woman approached the window, and then darken as Hux appeared behind her. Then collapse as she raised a lazy hand to drag down her lover’s face as he fondled her. When Poe turned away from the screen to find a can to throw up in, she turned it off. Slowly he returned to look Leia in the face. His eyes were crushed.

"Why would she let him touch her? Has she been brainwashed?"

"Poe, has it occurred to you that Lyric might possibly care for Hux? I know that's hard for you to comprehend but this looks like the vid of a woman in love."

Poe stayed still, his eyes staring into the distance. He chewed at the inside of his cheek and clenched his fists until his knuckles were white. His head began to shake, slowly at first then with more force.

"No, she can't love him. She wouldn't love a man like him. Something's happened. She needs me, and I have to go get her."

"Poe," Leia frowned, "you are not to leave this base under any circumstances. Do you hear me? I will not have your X-wing landing on Punisher's deck in a vain hope of surviving. Am I clear on this point?"

His eyes were hard, with a light deep inside Leia wasn't sure she wanted to investigate. "Crystal clear, General."

"Dismissed Dameron."

As she watched him walk away, Leia had the worst feeling inside, as though she were watching him walk away for the last time.

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A month after the fueling deck, Lyric awoke in the early morning hours with a heavy, throbbing feeling in her groin and back. Hux was on duty, and she managed to get up without assistance only to realize she was bleeding. After all these months, her period had finally returned, bringing with it every pain she'd scrambled to avoid most of her life. She waddled to the bathroom, trying not to bleed on the floor any worse than had already occurred.

She wadded the nightgown up and shoved it in the laundry hamper, then turned on the water for a hot shower. The pulsating water would help ease the muscle cramps as well as washing away the stain that stretched down her thighs. Once through in the shower, she searched for some sort of pad she could use until morning, when Hux could requisition what she needed from supplies.

Using a washcloth between her legs, she returned to her bedroom to survey the damage to the bed. The sheets were bloody, as well as the mattress itself. Frowning at herself, Lyric stripped the sheets and tried to flip the pad, but didn't have the strength on her own to lift. Instead she grabbed a grey sweater and black leggings, dressed quietly and walked to the living room.

It was still early in the artificial morning of the star destroyer, and Hux wasn't home from his bridge duty. She sat by the window and watched the stars wheel by at hyperspeed. She knew they were headed toward Coruscant, after spending months in the outer territories surveying. It seemed that the closer they got to the Core, the tighter Lyric's emotions pulled themselves. Soon, decisions were going to have to be made.
While she'd agreed, in theory, to Armitage's marriage proposal, there were so many details to be worked out. Once they reached the planet, they would transfer down to the surface and move into his apartments in Galactic City. The ballet had extended an invitation for her to begin rehearsals once the medical board reviewed her case, two of the major hurdles required to begin her life anew.

Armitage said he'd be happy to station planet side for a while as she rehabbed her life, yet it felt selfish for her to take him away just as the First Order was beginning to win over holdout planets through negotiation rather than nuclear explosions. However, once they married, would the First Order allow her to keep her career, or would she begin an endless round of meetings and diplomatic visits as an extension of the General and his office?

Then there was the matter of children. As she lay there in pain, wishing someone would rip her uterus out of her body in any way possible just to stop the ache, she realized she had never thought about being a mother. Her own hadn't been that shining of an example to the profession, compared to Aunt Shara, who made sure her son was wrapped in his parents' love. Hux's father was a tyrant, her's a Sith worshiper. What business did they have thinking about children?

When the pain grew unbearable, she called for a medic. He'd send a message to Hux, of course, but that was alright. She'd never had cramps like these, and she wondered if this was something left over from the crash, another reminder of her brush with death.

Armi arrived only moments after the medic team, his face worried and his eyes exhausted. She felt horrible, knowing this was nothing compared to the medical hurdles she'd already passed, but at the same time, it was nice to have his hand to hold while they poked and prodded and took blood. When the medic asked to see how much blood she's lost, she showed him her gown, and the sheets.

"What about now?"

She blushed, suddenly shy again around too many males. "I have a wash cloth."

She pulled down her leggings and made to retrieve the cloth, only frown at the sopping wet rag she found in her underpants.

"This seems like too much blood?" She murmured, not knowing the medic was thinking the same thing.

Before she was quite aware of what was happening, she was on her way back to the med-bay, Armitage following behind talking to the medic as they walked. She could only hear snippets of their conversation, but she knew it. Something was wrong. Her period should have been almost nothing, not bright red clumps of tissue and clots. The lights overhead gave her a sensory headache as they raced toward a surgical bay. She closed her eyes to rest.

"Don't leave me," she heard Hux speaking from someplace far away. "Stay awake love."

She tried to argue she wasn't asleep, but couldn't make the words come out. All that she could manage was a small squeak as the medics began working on her.

There was a brightness she tried to close her eyes from. But it only grew and grew. She tried to tell Armi to turn down the lights, but he wasn't answering her anymore. Everything seemed very far away. She heard someone say she was cold, but she didn't feel cold. She felt wonderful, warm, safe, and wondered why the difference.

She opened her eyes, and there were medics everywhere. Each arm and both legs had medics attaching leads, hooking up IVs. Armi stood off to the side, screaming at her to stay with him, not
to leave him alone again. His mouth moved but she barely heard him.

Lyric tried to tell him she wasn't going anywhere, but it was impossible to move. The room was filled with machines beeping and whirring. She recognized one of the medics as he leaned in her face. He appeared he was screaming too, but his voice was very far away, as if she were running through a tunnel. One of the machines made a long continuous warning note of alarm. Her heart wasn't beating right.

"We're going to put you under for a while, but don't worry. We'll be right here with you. We can save him."

Before the darkness took her away, she panicked something was wrong with Armitage. Who else needed saving besides him, except for Kylo Ren, and that was Rey's assignment. Then the familiar darkness reared up and she floated away into the abyss again.
Chapter Summary

Armitage and Lyric have a heart to heart, and Ren makes peace with Hux.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Love Me Like You Do'
Elle Goulding

Chapter Nine – Grown Up Decisions

Hux looked at the screen before him, watching the small, rapidly fluttering darkness with his face frozen in amazement and fear.

It was a heartbeat.

Their child's heartbeat.

Somehow, despite all the problems that she'd already overcome: multiple surgeries, multiple near-deaths, weeks; his seed managed to find purchase and now she carried his child. Part of him wanted to crow, another part of him wanted to throw up. He briefly wondered if all expectant fathers experienced this blind panic when first informed their lives were about to change forever.

Of course, there were complications from her crash which is what caused the bleeding, but the doctors were certain they had caught the issue early. They were going to keep her sedated for the rest of the day and if she had stabilized by dinner she would be released to go with him.

It was dangerous for a woman to travel in deep space in the first three months, and they estimated her at three to four weeks. He and Supreme Leader Ren already spent several hours juggling projects around to free his schedule for a few months to precipitate his move to planet side. There were meetings already set up for him with arms dealers, ship builders, creditors, everyone as he began the process of moving from field operations to command headquarters.

The only burr in his happiness was the Resistance were still out there somewhere. Poe Dameron was still out there, waiting for the chance to scoop her up and away from him. He'd already had the security increased at his apartments in Galactic City, and there were going to be round the clock Death troopers guarding Lyric and himself once they moved planet side, which helped him breathe easy enough to stay on land for these next months. Also, Ren and his scavenger were going to do research on who Lyric's father might be.

He walked into her med-room, and watched her as she slept. She hadn't been eating these past few
days, and now it made sense. He was well aware of how much she despised throwing up, going to extremes sometimes to keep from submitting to nausea. The blood transfusion was helping as well. Her iron was too low, and she needed more fresh food than allowed on a space ship.

Her hands were on top of the covers, on top of where one day a small bump would show the world Lyric Bey was his wife, bearing his child. The wedding would be soon, perhaps this weekend if the weather was going to be nice. The seamstress his sister adored had already arrived from Arkanis, and had the material waiting for her measurements. The invitations would go out tonight, after she approved the wording.

He slid his fingers along the sheet to clasp hers within his own, playing with the stone on her ring. He was content to just lay there, eyes closed with his head on her stomach, wondering about who their child would take after, and would it be a boy or a girl. Suddenly he felt her hands on his head, running her fingers through his hair.

"Stop," he muttered. "It'll be messy when I go back to quarters. I still have to walk through the halls."

"Poor General. Can't make a poor impression to the troops. Why am I in sick bay?" Her voice was thin and scared him.

"They determined you'd lost way too much blood for a regular cycle, so we brought you here for tests. They determined what the problem was, and also that you're four weeks pregnant."

"How? I thought everything was still messed up inside me."

Hux pulled out the holovid of the heartbeat. "They aren't sure. They're still running tests on how this happened."

"Did I miscarry?" She watched the holo with amazement on her face.

He shook his head. "No, at least not yet. They want to keep you still until the blood pressure levels out. How do you feel?"

She closed her eyes for a moment chewing on the inside of her lip. After a moment or two she opened them again and smiled at him.

"I feel like me, but pregnant."

"Well I guess that's a good thing. I'd hate to be marrying someone else."

"Armi, are we doing the right thing?"

"Love, if you can survive being blown out of space, then this baby will be magnificent. I can't decide if I want a daughter as beautiful as her mother, or a son with your instincts."

"A son with your red hair, but not my eyes. That would look odd."

He smiled. "Well then, a son with black hair and blue eyes, how would that work Lyric Bey?"

Tears welled in her eyes as she answered him. "How about at least one of each?"

"Is that a promise?"

She nodded. "You should go back and sleep, Armi. You just got off duty."
"I don't want to leave you, in case there's another problem."

Lyric took a deep breath. "Armi, we need to set some rules. Nothing big, but the most important one is, I'm capable of watching over myself. I've been doing so a long time. Don't get me wrong, I love that you want to protect me. It's one of the things I adore about you. But I don't want you to grow to regret me and the burden of taking care of me when you should be running the galaxy.

"I'm a selfish woman, Armitage. I'll take every ounce of love you can give me and still beg for more. I'll grow jealous if I see you speaking with a beautiful woman and I've been known to start a fight to get what I want. I want to be the only woman you adore, the only woman who shares your body, the only woman by your side, and in return I promise to be yours, by any definition of what that means to you."

Hux sat up and looked at her strangely. "What are you talking about."

He'd never seen a blush burn so fast. "I've been told ever since we met, by more than one source, that you have, certain tastes, that you've withheld from me, and I greatly appreciate that. I don't know anything about that world, but I trust you. When you think I'm ready, then I will be, otherwise, I have three simple requests of you. That's all."

"What are they?"

"One, never lie to me. No matter how ugly or evil you might think something is, if it affects us, or our children, then I must know the truth. How can we be a united front if we don't talk to each other with truth."

"I promise."

"Two, never cheat on me. I've given you everything Armitage Hux. My youth, my virginity, my love – I abandoned my family for you, I abandoned my world for you. After you held a blaster to my head. No matter what you think you need or want in bed, I will always give it to you."

"I promise."

"Three, never hurt me. You tried to kill me. Twice. At this moment in time, I trust you. I can't take losing that trust again. Not now that we have children to consider."

"I promise."

She smiled wearily. "Then I'll marry you Armitage. Whenever and wherever you want. So long as it's you and me, no one else matters, except maybe your sister. Of course, I wish Poe could be there, but we've each chosen our positions."

"And those are?"

"He is with General Organa and will always try to win me back, and I'm with General Hux, and won't kill the only family I have left in the universe."

He looked at her, wondering if there were still a corner of her mind that longed for the freedom and anonymity of the Resistance. Would she come to regret staying with him, just as she worried he'd resent her for leaving space? The answers were all in the future, and he decided to let it unfold as it would.

"Sleep love. I'll come back later to stay in here tonight, they've got a cot prepared for me. If your blood count goes up on the next blood test, then we'll see our way to Coruscant and take things
from there. If it doesn't, then you don't move from this bed until it does. And I don't move from your side, do we have a deal?"

"We have a deal."

"Excellent. Now, I have to go tell Ren what's going on, so go to sleep and I'll be back shortly."

He found Ren in his office, wearing a black t-shirt and sleeping pants. He'd just arisen for the day, and it appeared the Supreme Leader had had company the night before. Hux smiled to himself. Since Ren started fucking the scavenger (Rey, he reminded himself), his attitude toward life and the general had improved. He was thankful to the girl for that if nothing else.

"General, I hear we had to move Lyric back to med-bay this morning. Anything serious?"

"No Supreme Leader, in fact, everything is going to be perfect in about eight months."

Ren looked at him blankly. Hux forgot the boy-man had been raised according the Jedi principles of chastity.

"We're going to have a baby." As the words came out of his mouth, for the first time Hux felt real panic about what was happening. He slumped down at the table across from an apparently amused Ren. "Holy shit Ren, I'm having a baby. What the hell do I know about being a father, except what not to do."

"Well, that's a good place to start, knowing what not to do. I know Lyric didn't have a lot of experience with babies or families either."

"No," Hux laughed sourly. "Happy families is a concept neither of us is familiar with."

"What are you going to do?"

"Well, obviously my request for transfer still stands, only I'll be leaving with Lyric once we arrive at Coruscant for at least a year. Mitaka is ready to take on command of Punisher, and I have names listed for the other projects I'll be offloading. I'd like to stay at headquarters until Lyric and the baby are cleared for space travel."

Ren nodded in agreement. "I think that'll be doable. Also, I've been thinking about how Lyric would be an excellent cultural ambassador for the First Order. She's well loved, well spoken, and has experience on both sides of the conflict. Perhaps we can bring some of these skeptical inner core planets into line with honey, not salt."

"I agree," Hux admitted. "People love being around her, which certainly works in our favor."

"There is something I've been meaning to discuss with you General, if you have a moment."

"Of course Supreme Leader."

"Ren, please. When we are in private, let's dispense with the formalities. We each know where the other stands."

"Agreed."

"Good. Now then, it's past time you were given a promotion. This has nothing to do with your new position on Coruscant, it is merely a performance-based promotion."

Ren pulled a box out of his desk drawer. Inside were collar marks, each a griffon with a giant snake
crushed in its claws. The signet of a Field Marshall.

"Hux, we've had numerous differences over the years, but you are excellent at your job, and your planning and execution have brought us to the edge of total victory in the galaxy. No one deserves this more than you, and I hope it ushers in a new era of cooperation and friendship between you and I, as well as our wives."

Hux almost choked trying not to bite his tongue in half. "You're marrying?"

Ren nodded. "Not soon, but once we've committed to the future we all seek and the galaxy is at peace, then Rey and I will marry. But first I hear you and Lyric will tie the knot this weekend?"

"You heard correctly. We'll be marrying at the old Imperial rose gardens. The PR department has been handling things with my sister, Arabella who forwards things to Lyric. Will we see you there, along with your scavenger?" Hux winked when Ren started to protest Rey's designation. "Relax Ren, while I haven't joined the ranks of those who understand what's going on between the two of you, who am I to say a word when my fiancée technically is my prisoner of a war still winding down."

"Excellent Hux, I have full confidence in your ability to win us friends in the Inner Rim. You will receive information from all fleets, coordinate their movements based on our plans for conquest and expansion. Any news of the Resistance growing out of their nomadic existence is between you and I only. Neither of us need to worry about them for now. Until people start allying with them, they are weeds in the wilderness. We need to shore up our leadership and lay out to the faithful what we see as our next direction."

"And what is that direction Ren? Are we abandoning Snoke and his plans?"

"Bear with me Hux, this is a rather convoluted path. The First Order needs to bring security to the galaxy first and foremost. We need to build up our public relations image, and we need to create the foundations of a dynastic government that lasts generations not weeks. That won't be done here in the Inner Core with planet killers and dreadnoughts. That's where the diplomacy comes in. We've shown our iron fist, now let's extend the velvet glove and see what happens. I need you with me Hux, we need each other. You represent the boots on the ground, the troopers and fighters waging the fight to protect the Inner Core fat cats against lawless pirates and rebel scum. I represent the Force, which ties it all together. Rey brings the Balance of the Force, and Lyric is the balm we will need to heal the pain so much darkness has wrought."

"Are we in this together?" Kylo tuck his hand out, glove-free.

Hus removed his own, shook his former rival's hand. "We are together."

"Excellent. We arrive in Coruscant in two days. There will be a big welcoming ceremony at the space port, then you and Lyric will head on to the former Imperial compounds to stay until after the wedding on Saturday. Each of you will receive a datapad in the morning with your daily appointments. Some will be joint appearances, some solo. Tomorrow a supply ship will bring a dress for Lyric to wear upon disembarking. Any questions?"

"Yes, Ren. Are you going to schedule my honeymoon with this minute attention to detail?"

For the first time since forever, Kylo Ren smiled at Armitage Hux, and Hux didn't feel like there was knife headed for his back. Instead, Ren slapped Hux on the back urging him to go take a nap now that he was off duty and Lyric was stable. For a moment, it felt as though he'd fallen through the rabbit hole.
Chapter Ten – Traveling at Light Speed

Back in his quarters, it seemed empty without her there. The droids had already cleaned up the blood in the bedroom and on the floor. Hux headed for the shower, where he found more blood on the floor. How the hell did she lose so much blood and not miscarry? The doctor said it was an internal staple that pulled out, remains from one of the first surgeries done on the field to save her life, but he was terrified. Until she was safely inside the government palace and given a complete physical by specialists, he would be keeping Lyric as close to his side as possible.

He'd already begun packing, but after a long night watch, followed by a near heart attack in med-bay when Lyric's blood pressure bottomed out coupled with finding out he was to be a father, Hux was ready to sleep. He ran through the shower, then slid into the clean sheets. The faint hangover of lavender and sandalwood brought a smile to his face. He rolled over and buried his face in the pillow.

One more week and they'd be safe.

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Lyric awoke alone in the med-bay. The machines were still attached, still beeping at her, but the volume had all been turned down. The lights were down as well, and all she could hear was the ambient humming of the ship. She felt safe, though not particularly comfortable. She hated to admit to herself, but she was glad Hux had gone back their quarters. It gave her time to process what was happening in private.

Gods, what kind of horrible mother would she be, given Ciara's mental instability and controlling fear that someone was out to steal Lyric for nefarious purposes. Hux wasn't much better, with his sadistic brute of a father. How were they supposed to build a family? Sure, she'd lived with Shara and Kes, and seen their interactions with Poe but she'd been an injured bird back then, flitting from place to place to avoid facing her own pain.
She was not by nature a depressed person, which made these uncomfortable feelings even worse, since she didn't know how to express them out loud. Not to mention her body was already going through horrific stresses and injuries, now add pregnancy. These changes might be the straw that broke her spirit. For the first time since she was an adult, she let herself go and allowed pity.

None of the machines changed their tones, none of them noticed the lights in those magnificent amber eyes suddenly dimming. With a heavy sigh, Lyric closed the door on the last corner of light in her being, allowing the dark to flood in with its recriminations and judgments. All the voices who had been denied their acidic taunts for years now rushed forward to lash her with their whips and knives.

She tried to silence them as well, tried to cut herself off from the Force entirely, to allow herself to feel, really feel the depths of her physical and emotional pain. She needed that, needed to touch something that mattered. That no one could take from her or add to her, her pain was her own choice, no one else. She'd discovered that after fleeing to the Resistance. The raw pain she'd carried over from what Hux had attempted kept her focused, moving forward, at a time when all that felt right was giving up.

While she lay motionless, staring at nothing, inside a war raged and seethed for control of her sanity. No matter which way she looked, there were no winners in her conflict, only varying levels of pain. Pain to her cousin if she stayed with Hux. Pain to Hux if she left to rejoin the Resistance. Pain to her heart if she left him. Pain to her child that he'd been conceived at such an ill-advised time. Pain that she feared physically she wouldn't survive pregnancy. It was time to surrender and revel in the feelings.

As she sank deeper and deeper, a memory began to unfold itself. She was young. Too young. That's what her mother told the men who'd come to their home. She was too young to go with them. When they'd taken her arm, Lyric saw that arm throw those grown men through a wall. That brought in another memory. Deeper. Darker.

'Father'.

'Master'.

Medics came in and took reading, but it was still hours before they noticed the vacancy of her expression, the listlessness of her movements. They called Hux, but he was as mystified as they as to the problem. Only when they called Ren did her eyes flicker with any sort of light.

Ren would know her secret. He would rip the bandage off the wound of her life and tell Hux her secret. She didn't want him to do that, but she was powerless to stop him, unless she could convince him it was worth keeping.

Hux sat beside her, holding her hand, imploring her to speak to him, yell at him, throw something, to do anything which showed she were still with him. Her heart broke for him, but she had no way to tell him it wasn't his fault. He thought she was upset about being pregnant, and a part of her was. The larger part was given over to defending herself and her actions against a voice she'd fought every day of her life for seven years. The sneering disdain for her and her suffering.

'If you wish to waste time crying over things which are not important, why should I waste my time with you?'

Master.

Piccus.
When Ren arrived, Lyric felt an irrational sense of hate for the Supreme Leader that had never surfaced before. He approached and tried to ease himself into her mind, only for her to emit a violent snarl as she threw him against the far wall. Her upper lip curled back in a snarl, and the voice which came from her throat was not her own.

"Spawn of Vader, you dare touch the heiress of the Sith?"

Piccus.

*****

Hux and Ren were in his office, discussing the most recent problem.

"Palpatine was killed over thirty years ago, by Darth Vader, and Dooku beheaded over fifty years ago, Ren, also by your grandfather. How can she be his daughter?"

"I don't know daughter is the right word. When I verified her gene pattern against known Force sensitives, his was the only one possible to be a match for Lyric. I also know that with the Force, strange shit can happen. All we can do is see what happens the next time she wakes. She might not even remember what happened. I've never felt Lyric in such a dark state before."

Hux paced, his favorite activity when nervous. "Clone? We all know about Dooku. Could one of his disciples have done it?"

"No, not unless it was done without his permission. Ciara Bey was always insistent that the man who raped and stalked her was a real man who used the Force to subdue her. Dooku would have been thirty plus years dead by then. His last apprentice gone as well. That doesn't mean that someone we have yet to hear of is resurrecting Dooku's old operations. This bears investigation. If you don't object Hux, I want to send the Knights out to see what they can find. It's time the mystery of Lyric's father was put to rest, for all our sakes."

Leaving, Hux detoured to the office of his second in command, who he'd charged with having the chefs prepare a special dinner for he and Lyric. Once he knew everything was set, he stopped by the med-bay to collect his fiancée.

Her earlier depression seemed to be better since she'd insulted Ren. Despite his misgivings, Lyric insisted on walking back to their rooms. There was something very self-satisfying to see his staff bowing to them both, acknowledging her as Lady Hux. He'd miss the daily worship of tens of thousands under his command, however, the First Order would benefit from his skills in other areas.

By the time they were back in quarters, the effort of the walk was beginning to show. Stripping off her tunic and leggings, he investigated every inch of her skin with his fingers to make sure no needles or resistors were stuck to her. Satisfied, he slid her into his bed, then began to undress to join her.

"I thought you were on duty several more hours."

He smiled at her, his heart amazed this gorgeous creature was his. "I've been relieved of duties until I am required to report at Headquarters in Coruscant two moon cycles from tomorrow."

"I have you all to myself that long?"

"Well," he snuggled her into the crook of his arm, the other hand resting on her belly, "we do have the arrival ceremony tomorrow, followed by a week of events leading up to the wedding in seven
days. So to yourself alone, no. Will we be together all the time? No. But it will be time just for us. No work, I promise."

"Tell me about this arrival ceremony. I saw the dress Bella sent, it's amazing. How many people will be at the spaceport?"

"Well, the tradition is all personnel who aren't on duty are supposed to show up on parade for our arrival. Given the fever with which the population has been devouring your story, I imagine there will be people all along our route into the city, hoping for a glimpse."

"Armi, I'm so nervous. What if I mess this up?"

He laughed then kissed the tip of her upturned nose. "You could fall in a vat of shit and everyone would think it was the dearest thing. Haven't you discovered, you can do no wrong. People adore you, so much so it often makes me jealous."

She nestled against his side, her arms tight around him, relaxing into sleep. He could feel his cock growing stiffer, but the doctors advised against any intercourse until they were certain the bleeding was over. Instead he began making a list in his head of those items which needed to be packed for moving off ship and into their new apartments. Hux had never been a sentimental man. Most of the personal items in their rooms belonged to Lyric. He'd learned at an early age how to move all his possessions in one small bag.

The official press announcement went out that afternoon as well. "It is with great respect, the Supreme Leader of the First Order, Kylo Ren, announces the promotion of Armitage Hux to the rank of Field Marshall. FM Hux will be in charge of operations for the combines First Order forces across the galaxy, and will be stationed at Headquarters in Coruscant beginning two moon cycles from this date. It is also with great honor that the First Order announces the marriage, seven day-cycles from this date, of Field Marshall Armitage Hux to the Lady Lyric Bey. We wish them a long and happy marriage."

By the time dinner arrived, there were seventy-two more requests for personal interviews, this time with the happy couple not just Lyric alone. He helped her out of bed and into a dressing gown, her beautiful black curls wrapped in a messy bun on top of her head. Once seated at the dining table, she smiled at him, dark circles under her eyes betraying how weak she was.

"What is all this Armi?"

"Just a private dinner, a few of your favorite things, to say farewell to our life aboard Punisher and to tell you again how much I love you."

There were nerf steaks so tender they could cut the meat with a fork alone, fresh green vegetables that she adored but never ate because no one could make them taste like homegrown fresh, and, on a suggestion from Ren, strawberries with creme and chocolate for dessert.

She treasured every bite, he sat and watched her with rapt fascination. When she was almost finished, her eyes sparkled as she took a finger full of the cream and spread it across his lips. Before he could make a sound however, she was in his lap, greedily licking and sucking them clean.

He stared at her in frank amazement. There was a look in her eyes he'd never noticed before, or she'd never let him noticed. One that bespoke of love and promises, and it brought his still unreleased cock back to full mast.
"Hmm," she whispered. "What should we do about that?"

"Lyric." His voice was strangled with the struggle of withheld passion. She'd never gone down on him before. He wasn't sure if she understood the concept. But he was possessed with the desire to teach her.

Ripping down his sleeping pants and underwear, he sat back down, letting his cock wave at her from his lap. Slowly she knelt between his legs, her eyes going back and forth between his eyes and the head of his now weeping dick. When she licked her lips, he threw his head back and groaned.

"I don't know what I'm doing." She confessed, those big eyes glowing at him with frank honesty. "Tell me what you like."

He frowned at her. "I'm not going to tell you what other women have done. That's weird."

"Then just tell me what you want me to do."

The instant she said that, the dominating part of him slid back into control. Only this time, he softened the edges a little, willing to keep building her trust by pulling back on his need to control and subdue her.

"Put one hand around the base, use the other to brace yourself against my leg. Then just act like you're giving me a kiss, an open-mouthed kiss. Run your tongue gently around the head, especially on the bundle of knots on the underside. While you start there, I'll adjust more as we go along."

Lyric wrapped her left hand around the base of his cock, while cocking her head to examine him closer. Using his muscles, he wagged himself in her face, making her laugh and blush at the same time. Then she stuck out her tongue and licked along the edges of the glans, then down to the nerve bundle before plunging as much of him into her mouth at once as she could.

With her teeth ever so lightly against his skin, she dragged upward, creating a pain pleasure in the motion. He drew in a sharp breath, and wrapped his hand in her baby soft curls.

"Yeah, like that." He encouraged her. "Lick, suck, nibble carefully, you can't really hurt unless you try. Go ahead and play."

He leaned his head back, trying so hard not to give her explicit directions but overall, he couldn't complain. She treated his cock like a plaything she wanted to learn each secret to and he ground his teeth to extend the exquisite agony. But when she took his testicles in her mouth and sucked, it was over.

"Put me back in your mouth," he hissed. "Open your throat, relax your jaw, and breathe through your nose."

Placing his hand on her neck to keep her in place, he thrust his hips upward, shoving hard back into her throat. She almost choked, but quickly adapted as he fucked her mouth. Luckily it only took a minute before he shot himself down her throat.

She coughed, trying to not gag on the hot liquid, and he released his hold on her hair and pulled her from the floor up into his arms. He wiped the corners of her mouth and kissed her, letting his happiness and pleasure flow through his touch.

"Thank you, love. That was the most wonderful thing I've ever felt."

Blushing again. Damn, why does her blush always make him harden? "I'm glad I could make you
happy."

"Happy? Love, I am beside myself right now. The woman I've loved since the moment I met her just sucked me off until I couldn't see straight, not to mention she's going to marry me and has my baby inside her. Couple that with contentment with my work, and I am in a place I never thought I find myself."

"Where's that?"

"At peace."

She laughed, then kissed his forehead. "A warrior found peace with a ballerina. If that isn't the oddest statement in this universe I don't know what is."

"Oh, I don't know. How about the Supreme Leader marrying a scavenger from Jakku?"

Lyric stood up, clapping her hands and dancing. "I knew it! I knew it! I knew it! Oh Armi, she's so perfect for him, and him for her. Is he bringing her to the wedding? Oh, can he bring her to the wedding, what with everything? Armi, this is terrible. We have to figure out how she can be there. I can't be happy if I know Ren is miserable."

At the whiplash pace of her emotions, Hux wasn't quite sure how he was going to survive eight more months of her mood swings. Now she was on the floor in a puddle, crying because Ren couldn't invite his bedmate to their wedding. He needed something happy, quick.

"Love, did I tell you Bella will have the dressmaker at the apartments tomorrow for a first fitting on the wedding dress? She's one of the most highly sought-after seamstresses in the Core, and was delighted to have the chance to make your outfits."

"I'm so glad we're getting married before I turn into a pregnant nerf." Tears of a different sort.

"Lyric, I will love you no matter what size you become. Because you are carrying in my child, but mostly because you are beautiful in my eyes."

"These hormones are giving me a headache." She wiped the tears from her eyes and looked up at him in shame. "I'm a mess." She held out her hand for him to assist her up.

Gracefully she unfolded herself from the floor and into his arms. He walked her over to the window, now filled with the planet Coruscant. They had apparently entered into geosynchronous orbit.

He wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her back to his chest. "Welcome home, Lady Hux."

Chapter End Notes

I hope everyone is enjoying. We're about a third of the way through and there's lots of good stuff still to come. I'd love to answer any questions or comments, so feel free to let me know what works or doesn't for you.
Chapter Eleven - Arriving on Coruscant

The sun was actually shining when their shuttle touched down at the spaceport in Galactic City. Row after row of gleaming First Order troops stood in the sunlight, with massive throngs of civilians fenced off from the main landing area, all cheering and screaming her name. Lyric paused on the ramp off of the shuttle, her eyes blinking at the unaccustomed sunlight. She'd been on the First Order star destroyer for seven months.

Hux paused and smiled, holding out his arm to help her down the walkway to the reviewing area. His eyes shown at her, encouraging her as she gracefully limped across the tarmac. The dress which Bella Hux had chosen for her new sister by law was perfect. A dark grey chiffon, covered with a wool high waisted coat, all trimmed with a rich red. For shoes they had gone with ballet flats, and the walking cast on her ankle was replaced with a steel and leather brace.

The rich black curls were pulled up into a bun on her head, showcasing her long, graceful neck, and she carried a bouquet of local flowers presented by a group of school children. Through it all she smiled and held onto Hux as if she were afraid to move without him. Once they were seated on the reviewing stand, she finally allowed herself to look at the crowds.

Too many people, there were too many people and she felt as if her heart would crawl out of her mouth. Worse, there was a small statement she was supposed to make. How would she ever speak to this many people? Hux would have to do it for her. He could do it, he was never afraid, unless she were hurt. She recalled the look in his eyes when he'd recognized her on Yavin 4, the panic when he realized how injured she was.

All of a sudden, he was holding out his hand to her again. She looked up and took his fingers and twined them with hers. She kept her eyes on his, knowing he wouldn't let her fail. He pulled her to the podium, handing her the cards she needed to read. He pulled her into the warm circle of his arm, as he positioned them both before the microphone.
He whispered for her ears only, "You look magnificent."

She blushed, then looked down at the cards in her hands.

"My fellow Citizens, thank you so much for your cards and notes, sent for my recuperation. It has been a long seven months, and I still have far to go, but with your love and support, along with my husband, Field Marshall Armitage Hux, I know I will be dancing for you again. I want to thank the Supreme Leader for his time and support during my illness, and also, I extend my gratitude to the crew and troops of the Punisher, who worked tirelessly to find and rescue me. Thank you all so much."

The field erupted in shouts and applause, and when she glanced at Hux to make sure she'd done alright, he surprised her and most of those in attendance by pulling her closer and kissing her deeply. The troops went crazy, cat-calling and hooting at their commanding officer and his ballerina. When he broke the kiss, she smiled at him and laid her hand over his heart.

The applause lasted for ten minutes.

The parade ended up taking almost two hours, and by then Lyric was frantic to eat something. Noticing her growing discomfort, Hux whispered to his assistant and soon a plate of fruit appeared at her elbow. She smiled at the young officer apparently tasked with being her gofer while thanking everyone profusely. Hux explained it to the others as a by-product of her injuries, the mysterious bottoming out of her blood pressure.

Lunch was a base wide event, with Lyric and Hux seated at the main table along with the base commander and his wife, the mayor of Galactic City and his wife, and other members of the Council of the First Order, who would be working with Hux in his new position. Most of the talk was of the war in the Outer Rim, and the upcoming peace talks with the Inner core planets to accept First Order oversight. Lyric responded when asked direct questions, but her strength was beginning to lag. After several hours in the foreign sunshine, she had a pounding headache and wanted nothing more than to strip and take a nap.

She was careful to avoid any conversations which dug into what she had been doing with the Resistance. Therefore, it was a surprise to her when, as she stood to make her way to the restroom, the officer who'd brought her the fruit glided to her elbow to escort her. She turned and saw a tall, broad-shouldered officer with sandy blonde hair and laughing grey eyes. A scar ran along his right jaw.

"Please take your hand off me." She was firm but polite. No one touched her without permission, officer or not. She wasn't a piece of meat. "I am perfectly capable of making my own way to the fresher."

"Orders, my lady. I'm sorry. You aren't to be allowed to roam around without an escort. Today, that's me. My name is Lieutenant Kez Marab. The restrooms are this way, my lady."

She tried to turn around to complain to Hux, but there were people blocking his vision of her. As they made for the door, suddenly they were mobbed by throngs of strangers. Her arm was stripped from Lt. Marab's and she was pushed along with crowd. As she started to scream, a cloth was shoved in her mouth, and a bag over her head.

She was picked up from the ground and carried like a sack of flour over someone's shoulder. First they were walking, then they were running. All of sudden the air rang with sirens and warning bells. Her capture had been discovered.
They threw her body into a corner, softened with several mattresses. She could hear the sounds of a ship being readied for space flight. The voices didn't speak a language she understood, but she knew what was happening.

Either the Resistance had captured her back, or hell had sent a devil to find her.

She felt the familiar hole in her stomach, meaning they were leaving the planet's atmosphere. Someone took the bags off her head, and she was in a smuggler's freighter. The crew parted so their pilot could step forward to address their captive. It was the man who'd called himself Kez Marab.

"Welcome to the "Kestrel", Ms. Bey. The Resistance sends their regards."

Lyric stared in disbelief at her captor. When would this nightmare end? All she wanted was to go back to Coruscant and climb into the bed she knew was waiting for her.

"I'll be glad to wager my husband will kill you all slowly, especially if anything happens to me. You should just turn around and take me back right now. He might be persuaded to mercy, if I ask."

The crew laughed, which made her sit back and wonder exactly what was going on.

Marab wiped his eyes and answered her. "Ms. Bey, I have no intension of making a First Order interrogation room my last resting place. If I return you to Hux, we'll not live long enough to take a deep breath. But if I give you to the Resistance, we'll be heroes."

"Unfortunately for you, we're no supporters of the Resistance. Your cousin Poe, asked me when you were first captured to rescue you, and we refused due to the suicide nature of the request. But you arriving with such pomp and circumstances on Coruscant made it impossible to resist. Now, we've sent a message to all interested parties. As soon as we complete negotiations you'll be on your way home, or at least to one of them."

Lyric's anger took hold and wouldn't let her rest. "How dare you presume to take me away from my husband."

"You aren't to be married until later." He smirked at her, driving her wrath hotter.

"We married weeks ago on the ship. This is only an official ceremony for the press. Let me go home," she pleaded. "You can leave me on another planet, and I'll contact Armitage myself. I'll let you live, if you let me go."

"Tempting as that might sound, we have no love for the First Order. Nothing against you, Ms. Bey, but I think I know Hux better than you. If he gets his hands on us, we'll all die horrible deaths and that's not what any of us foresee happening. Anything would be better than torture at the hands of that sadist."

"There's no where you can hide from him," Lyric insisted. "He's a hunter by nature, and you've open a door which was better left closed. He'll never stop. Even if you let me go, unless I tell him, he'll kill you."

"Why are you so certain of that? Once he has you back, why else would he waste another minute on us and the 'Kestrel'? He'll drink a glass of wine in toast to your return as we accelerate to hyper speed."

She chewed on her lip briefly before making up her mind. "Because you've not just kidnapped the wife of Armitage Hux. You've taken the mother of his child. His possessiveness is legendary, and
you just opened the door on the Hunter."

*****

Marab sat down in his cabin and ran his fingers through his sandy blonde hair. This whole job had just gone to shit, and he was running out of ways to get out of this without losing his life. He'd flared off messages to the Resistance, and to Hux. He only hoped he'd been honest enough with both parties for them to spare his life.

He hadn't known she was pregnant. No one told them that, and kidnapping pregnant women rated about as low on his personal scale as he could go. The challenge to take Lyric Bey from right under the nose of the First Order seemed right up his alley, a dare he couldn't pass on. But what he knew as sure as he was sitting down, was that Armitage Hux would chase him around the universe without pity if anything happened to his wife or child.

That scared him.

He'd taken her to med-bay after that revelation, to have the machines run a thorough scan. If he was going to have to talk to Hux, he wanted to know for a fact that she was alright. The computer assured him she was fine. Almost five weeks pregnant, and still in a weakened condition from the crash months previous.

The worst part of all this had to be, she was even more beautiful in person than any holo, and his dick had been hard since the moment he'd taken her arm back on Coruscant. He wanted her, even knowing she was Hux's, and he couldn't decide if that made him human or some pervert. He'd never seen a woman this hauntingly gorgeous, and he already knew himself well enough to remove himself from her presence. Otherwise, all bets were off.

He keyed in the comm frequency she had given him. "Kestrel calling Field Marshall Hux."

The reply was instant. "Hux."

"Good evening Field Marshall, lovely day for a parade."

"Oh Gods, are you related to that damn pilot too?"

"What?"

"Never mind. I'm tired of games Marab, where is my wife?"

"Sleeping right now, and fine. I'm sending you her medical scan to prove she's fine."

"That stops your instant execution. Where are you trying to take her?"

"Now that's the problem. See I was asked to rescue her, but when we informed the little lady this was a rescue, she became hysterical and insisted the only place she would go is back to you. Now I hate to back out of a deal, but she's made it known if we send her to the Resistance, she'll steal an escape pod and crash on the closest planet to get back to you."

"Then bring her to me, and perhaps I won't have you blown out of the skies."

"I want to Hux, I really do. But I also want to live another day. Any chance we can call a truce to exchange this highly emotional prisoner?"

There was a moment of silence, then he heard the pickup keyed again. "I'm sending you
coordinates. We'll rendezvous there in 6 hours."

"Received. And Hux?"

"Yes?"

"I truly am sorry. We didn't know she was pregnant. I promise you though, she's receiving excellent care while here."

"For your sake, you better hope she continues to be well."

The radio went silent. Marab stared into the distance and wondered how the hell he was going to explain to Poe Dameron why he'd returned Lyric Bey to the First Order. Cursing his luck, he repeated again, to anyone who might be listening, "I didn't know she was pregnant."

*****

Leia sighed heavily and looked at Rey. "Dameron did what?"

"Hired Kez Marab to kidnap Lyric from the welcoming ceremonies on Coruscant and bring her to him. Luckily Lyric convinced Marab she'd crash land on a deserted asteroid before she'd leave Hux. They are rendezvousing now for her to head back with Punisher. Marab is hoping to get out of this with his life."

"And where is Poe?"

Now it was Rey's turn to sigh. "Headed toward Coruscant. Insisting Lyric is brainwashed and needs him to rescue her. So now I'm headed after him to keep him out of the way of an already highly pissed off Hux. I need something other than the Falcon, do we have something I can use?"

"Have you talked with Ben about this?"

"I did. He's going to play neutral. He won't let Hux start anything but won't stop Hux if Poe does anything stupid. That, apparently, is going to be my job."

"Take that captured TIE fighter. Ben can send you a code to land, and it won't raise as much notice as an X-wing. If you're going to see Lyric, tell her she has my love, if not my approval."

"Yes General, any messages for Ben?"

Leia smiled, "All my love."
Reunion

Chapter Summary

Kez Marab returns Lyric to Hux, and the two return to Coruscant, to begin wedding preparations.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Lady'
Styx

Chapter Twelve - Reunion

They made the rendezvous in less than five hours, and Hux was already parked, waiting. TIE fighters escorted the 'Kestrel' down into the main hanger, where Marab could see Hux, Kylo Ren, and a shit ton of Storm troopers waiting for them.

The bad feeling in his guts reminded him again that this whole job had been a shit idea.

He'd left his crew at their favorite watering hole, and made Lyric help as co-pilot. He had to admit the girl had good instincts, which made her relationship with Hux all the more mysterious, and one which Marab couldn't let linger in the air between them any longer.

"So, marrying Hux, what's that all about?"

She continued running the board, ignoring him for so long he started to drop the subject. Suddenly she dropped her hands and turned to face him. Those eyes, he decided, the eyes were dangerous to stare at for too long. They could make him promise things he had no intention of doing, just to see her smile. Again, he damned Poe Dameron for putting him in this shit of a predicament.

"We cannot excuse who we love. Sometimes love doesn't make sense, but does that mean we should just throw away our chances because the one our heart chooses isn't who others think your life should contain? No. I know loving Armitage doesn't make sense, but I don't care. I choose to love him. Me, my choice, and I will live with the consequences of my choices right or wrong."

He shook his head. "You are heartbreakingly beautiful, any man would fight for the chance to lay themselves at your feet, and your choice is a sadistic, brutal, cold, wretch of a human. Why?"

Her eyes softened, and Marab felt a chunk of his heart slid out of his chest and land at her feet. He was snared, damn it.

"You don't see the same Armitage Hux I see, but that's okay. I see a man who was denied love and simple affection his whole life. The side of him that I see regrets the things Snoke forced him, and
Kylo Ren, to do in his name. Now that he and Ren are in charge of the First Order, the Resistance might find they have a sympathetic ear at Headquarters."

She stood up to walk back into the cabin, and he quickly moved to block her way. Her head cocked as she wrinkled her forehead.

"Please move?"

Marab shook his head. "If I don't do this, I'll regret it forever. If I live through the next ten minutes."

He grabbed her and pulled her to his chest. Her hands flew between them but his lips captured hers before she could push him away.

Her mouth was soft, and he felt the warmth of her wrapping around the both of them as her body submitted when her mind refused. The turmoil rolled off her in waves of confusion, lust, need, and disgust. He sucked her lower lip into his mouth and moaned when she pulled away from him, panicked.

"Stop." Her eyes spoke of pain, deep pain, and it shook him enough to step aside and let her pass. She blew past him to the gangway, slapping the release in her haste to get away from him. As she poised to run down the ramp, her eyes met his again, for one long moment.

Eyes that wondered where it might have gone, if the galaxy were different.

As the Storm troopers cuffed him and dragged him off behind her, Kez Marab knew he'd affected Lyric Bey just as strongly as she'd affected him.

*****

She ran down the ramp, eyes locking on Hux's as soon as she hit the ground. She didn't stop running until she was in his arms, tears flowing uncontrolled. He was whispering something in her ear, but she couldn't hear over the pounding of her heart.

Hux was here, she was safe. She could drop the mask and let her emotions run because he would take care of her. Then she noticed the cuffs on Kez Marab.

"I thought he was under a truce. You said you'd let him go."

"I will, love. Once we've questioned him. I promise, no serious harm will come to the traitorous scum."

"He could have turned me over to your enemies, Armitage. Instead he bargained in good faith with you once he knew the truth of the situation. I ask you only observe your word and release him and his ship, unharmed, once you've questioned him."

Hux turned and pulled her into his arm, motioning for the prisoner to follow them back to his shuttle. Once she was inside, she allowed him to tuck her into the couch, sitting beside her while Marab stood. She avoided eye contact with the man who'd had the temerity to kiss her, hoping Hux couldn't read the confusion in her mind.

"Who hired you to kidnap Lady Hux?"

"I was dared to kidnap her from under your nose by those who would like to see Lyric Bey free and reunited with her family."
"I am her family," Hux retorted harshly. "If you are referring to her Resistance family, Lyric no longer wishes to be surrounded by their politics and chatter."

"So the lady informed me, multiple times, and in several different languages."

Hux smiled and took her hand in his. "Thank you for doing the honorable thing and returning her. I will spare you, and your ship, but let Dameron know, she does not want him risking his life to take her from where she has found true happiness."

"Not that I doubt you General, but I'd feel better hearing it from her own lips."

Lyric darted her tongue over her lips, recalling the strange emotions this man brought to her. "As I told you, I love Armitage, we're going to be married. I love my cousin, but we are not the same people anymore. Maybe one day he will see a way to forgive me, but I will not look back on my decisions. They are final."

"Then I guess we have nothing further to say, Lady Hux."

Hearing him use that title ripped across her heart but she didn't know why. "I suppose not Kez Marab. Thank you, for doing the right thing."

"Any time."

Marab was returned to the 'Kestrel', and the last thing he saw as he left the bay, was Lyric standing on the deck, watching him fly away.

After the ship was gone, she turned around and made her way back to the cabin. Hux was waiting for her.

"Well," he queried, "do you think he knows something?"

"He knows who my father is, I would lay better than even odds."

He nodded. "We've placed a tracker on his ship. I'll soon know who besides your cousin is out there looking for you. Thank you, for communicating with Ren through the Force, letting us know what was happening. Now," he pulled her tunic off, "let me look at you and have my med-bay run our tests. Not that I don't trust that idiot, but this is your life. I won't take chances."

Nodding quietly, she allowed the droid to pull blood and run its tests. Same as before. Still pregnant. Still anemic. Still frail. After the exam, she pulled on a clean set of leggings and tunic Hux had brought from Coruscant. It would take them four hours to return to the planet, and she intended to spend every minute resting.

Contacting Ren and Rey while on the 'Kestrel' had worn her down, and while juice could replenish fluids, it couldn't soothe her burning mind. Kez Marab had a connection to her father, she knew it. What confused her was why? Poe wouldn't have sent strangers to take her. That's why he'd sent their uncle before, because Lyric would never go willingly with anyone, no matter who they said sent them.

Ciara had taught her that. The code system. She still heard her mother in her ears, "Never trust a stranger, my love. I will never send a stranger for you. Even so, they must say the right words, or they do not have my permission. Many people will lie to you. I will never lie."

Of course that had been another lie. Another lie to compound the others Ciara fed to her all her life. More than once, Lyric wondered if her mother was lying to cover up her own behavior. Maybe her
mother was just a damn whore, and had no idea who her father even was. Then she could just wash away the past with a sweep of an eraser, and move forward knowing nothing else would stand in the way of her happiness.

In the artificial night of her room, there was a strange blue glow. When she looked to see what was causing the light, she was surprised to see a man. Or rather the ghost of a man, dressed in the traditional robes of a Jedi Master. Unfortunately, Lyric had no idea who he was.

He answered her unspoken question. "I'm no one you've met before, that's why you don't recognize me. But I know you, or better I know what you are."

"You heard my thoughts?"

"Yes. Do you know what I am?"

"A Jedi, I give up, are you Darth Vader?"

A smiled pulled at his lips, "You've spent too much time with Anakin's grandson. There are other Force ghosts beside Anakin."

"I'm sorry, the Force wasn't a part of our family until me, so I don't know much about your order, except what I know from Ren and Rey."

"That's understandable. Most people know think we are legends any way. My name Ben Kenobi, Obi-Wan Kenobi. I'm here to talk to you about your place in things."

She looked at him long and thoughtfully. "What if I like my place right where I am?"

Kenobi laughed, the outline shimmering along with him. "Sounds just about right for the Force child you are. Just like Anakin was, determined to make the world run your way. However, in this care you are correct. Your place is by Armitage Hux, just as Rey's is beside Ben Solo, who now calls himself Kylo Ren. Two men steeped in the dark side by Snoke, whose hold on themselves is tenuous at best. Thus, the enemy is moving to keep them at odds with each other, to feed both men's rage, keep them off balance."

"You mean someone is trying to upset the galaxy by ridding it of the light? Rey told me that, but I'm no Jedi."

"No," he took a step toward her. "You are something more wonderful than just a Jedi. You are the Force, in human form. A living, breathing representation of what balance looks like, and you pull anger out of people like water to a sponge. To the darkness, you will always be the unattainable, because darkness has no form, only shapeless fear. Those who represent your father's side of the Force cannot make you submit to their will, nor you can make Hux completely free from Snoke's teachings and torture alone. You can only be there when the dark tries to influence the game, like now."

"What do you mean?"

"Hux would have blown Marab out of the sky if you hadn't reminded him he'd made a bargain for mercy. Where once Armitage would have torn the universe apart to find you and make you pay for leaving him, now he would extend his hand to an enemy to keep you and your child safe. Do you see the difference?"

"I think so. I want to help him be a better man. The man I know, who laughs at silly things or just because I'm near him. I know what he's done, but I think he and Ren can make it right, now that
Snoke is gone."

"So long as you and Rey can provide their balance. You must help Armitage come around to accepting Rey of Jakku. She is a vital part of the Force's plans but until Hux bends, the rest of the First Order will demand her blood. Make him see, Lyric, open his eyes to love. He's so close, you only need to take his hand and guide him the rest of the way."

Then he was gone, and she wondered if she'd dreamed the whole thing.

*****

This time there was no grand ceremony. The planet was on locked down until Hux was satisfied there were no lingering threats to his family. He'd even had his sister brought onto Punisher, not knowing if she were a target as well. It marked the first time in years Lyric had spent any time with Bella Hux, and it was strange going at first. But Bella was warmer than her brother, and the two women found common ground upon which to meet.

They returned to their apartments with no fanfare other than a greeting by the Commander of the Guard, who introduced their household staff. Hux acknowledged them a curt nod before informing everyone the rest of the day was to be rescheduled. He was taking Lyric away from the public for twenty-four hours for her health. Their schedules would resume the next morning. Then he took her by the elbow and steered her to their private quarters.

Once alone, he pulled her close, not able to get close enough until they could be skin to skin. She kissed him with equal heat, wrapping those long dancer legs around his waist as he pinned her against the wall of the living room.

His hands grabbed her ass, helping to support her weight as he slid into her with no warning, no preparation. He tried to be gentle, but the stress and rage of her disappearance took the capacity for tenderness away from him as he took her nipples in his fingertips, tweaking them harder and harder until she gasped from the pain. He pounded into her, unable to slow down, something primal driving his need to mark her, reassure himself that she was still his and his alone. Marab's hands on Lyric, Hux could see them in his mind each time he closed his eyes.

"Mine," he growled into her ear before biting along her shoulder, leaving teeth marks in her pale flesh. "Only mine."

"Yes," she breathed in agreement. "Yours."

Harder and harder he plunged into her depths, his need as big as the galaxy he commanded. Her walls constricted around him, driving him blind as he came deep inside, feeling as though he were pouring his soul into her womb. She cried his name as her nails dug into his back, leaving her marks on him as well.

He pulled himself out of her, whispering apologies over and over for using her body to release his fears, but he knew no other way to show her how precious she's to him, and how far he will go to make certain nothing happens to her again. She burrowed against him, seeking warmth and safety, and they finally went to bed, sated and complete in their new home.

The next morning would begin the circus which would culminate in the wedding in six days. But tonight, tonight they were just themselves.
Wedding Preparations

Chapter Summary

It's a busy week for Lyric as wedding preparations switch into high gear. But Lyric needs a maid of honor, and she has her heart set on Rey. The question: how to bring the Most Wanted person in the universe to the heart of the First Order without someone getting killed?

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Harvest Moon'
Neil Young

Chapter Thirteen - Wedding Preparations

The next morning brought her first round of morning sickness, and Lyric found herself confronting the old nemesis, nausea. Once the familiar twirling in her stomach began, she pulled over her datapad to order some soda crackers and sparkling water. Until they arrived, she lay on her back willing her stomach to ignore the feeling. She would not throw up, she wouldn't.

Armitage was less than helpful. "Love, we can order some meds to combat the nausea. Don't suffer if you don't need to."

"I won't take anything that might harm the baby. I know how to deal with throwing up, I've been ignoring it my whole life."

He smiled lazily. "I have reports to read before the hordes descend upon us. Once you feel like sitting up, I'll order some breakfast."

"No food in this room!" The order barely made it from her lips when the heaves shook her shoulders and she ran for the bathroom. Damn Armitage and his iron stomach. The mere thought of him eating brought hers up, and the next thing she knew, she'd thrown up so hard, she was peeing on her own feet. That proved too much, and she burst into full on hormonal pregnancy tears.

Hux almost burst into laughter but caught himself when she looked at him through a veil of tears. "Hop in the shower, I'll grab you something to throw on until the seamstress arrives. And no food, I'll have a protein shake and some caf on the way to my first meeting."

While she cleaned up, and rinsed her mouth, he shaved and listened to the reports he needed for his first meeting. When she moved to the counter to do her makeup and hair, he jumped into the shower. Once he exited, she was in the bedroom, stretching.
She needed a bar, in order to truly stretch but there were ways, certain pieces of furniture that allowed the required exercise. No toe shoes, just her own feet moving gracefully through the positions, helping her muscle memory bring back the balance she embodied. She hummed a tune as she pirouetted across the bedroom and into his arms, smiling widely.

"I am so out of shape." She kissed him on the cheek gently. "Now, go be a magnificent Field Mouse, or whatever it is."

"Field Marshall, love. Now Bella and the seamstress will be here in about 15 minutes. There's my dressing gown on the bed which you can wear while they do measurements. We shall see each other at lunch, which I believe is an interview with one of the local news people. So, since I won't get to see them again until tonight," he pulled her to him and sucked both of her nipples then pinched them stiff. "I love you."

"I love you."

As soon as he left, Lyric settled herself on the bed, meditating. She knew right what she wanted.

"Rey?"

"Oh thank the Maker you checked in. Have you seen Poe?"

"Why would I see Poe? Isn't he with you?"

"Poe left yesterday headed to Coruscant. He's certain you've been brainwashed, and are pining your heart away for someone to rescue you."

"Gods, my cousin is a moron. Where are you?"

"Headed right behind him to stop him from committing suicide by Hux."

"Good, then you'll be here for the wedding. I need you."

"I don't think that would be a good idea."

"Kylo is best man. Besides I need a maid to stand as my witness, and I want you."

Rey's voice hesitated. "You do know I'm most wanted on the First Order's warrants? How am I supposed to stand with you when there'll about ten thousand blasters trained at my head?"

"Because I'll tell Kylo and Armitage that I want you as my maid, and that for our wedding day, a truce shall exist here on Coruscant, to celebrate our wedding."

Rey looked at her dumbfounded. "You are either the craziest woman in the galaxy or the smartest. Do you think you can make it happen?"

"I know just the way to get my husband's favor, and Kylo already wants to see you so that's not a stumbling block. I wish I could make you into someone else for the day, but perhaps we can manage a new name?" Lyric was practically leaping as her happiness leaked out into the universe. Even Rey could feel its impact, parsecs away.

"I don't have anything to wear."

"We can manage that."

When Bella Hux arrived with her retinue, they found Lyric Bey with an unknown dark-haired
friend who she insisted be fitted for her maid's dress first. She gave little explanation only to say she was a mutual friend of the Supreme Leader and herself and would be standing up with her as witness. Rey was in shock, given that she'd never physically moved from one place to another via the Force. Then there was the matter of Luke killing himself by stretching his Force projection too far for too long. But Lyric's apparently endless connection to the Force enabled Rey to step into her room as easily as her physical body would have. Apparently given the right push, the Force could be quite powerful when it needed to be.

Meanwhile Lyric moved forward with her agenda of having Rey actually be at the wedding. After the fittings were done for the wedding dress, Lyric asked the older woman to stay behind for a private moment.

Madam Renee was a small woman with a keen eye and a quick wit. "What may I do for you Lady Hux?"

Lyric opened her mouth, unsure of how to ask for what she wanted. Blushing, she decided to back into the question.

"The Field Marshall's favorite colors are of course, black and red."

"And excellent along with your flawless skin, my lady."

"I wish to, surprise, my husband, if you understand what I mean."

The woman nodded as a small smile crinkled her eyes. "I think I do, my lady. Pardon my frankness, you will soon discover a woman has no secrets from her dresser, but am I correct in assuming you have already bedded the officer in question."

"Oh yes."

"Was he your first?"

How can you blush on top of a blush? "Yes."

"Then allow me to craft something special for your wedding night, my gift to your union."

"Thank you, but I was wondering if you might have anything you could provide me for tonight. You see, I want to make tonight memorable, it's our first in our new home and in order to do that, I need to look like something I'm not, or at least not yet. Am I making any sense?"

"Wait here." The woman ducked into her trunk and searched for a moment. She came back with a small scrape of material in black lace with red trim. "Try this on for size."

With the woman's help she managed to figure out where the skimpy straps went and how to tie the ribbons. As the seamstress stepped back, she nodded appreciatively. "If this doesn't make him yours, then he's dead." She gently turned Lyric to face the mirror.

The most solid piece of the outfit was the black leather collar. The fabric fell in two lines straight over the blush of her nipples before sliding between her legs then over the curve of her ass to tie at the waist. It left nothing to the imagination, highlighting her leg length. She smiled, nodded her appreciation to the woman. She quickly pulled her robe over the outfit and smiled at her.

"I will be anxiously awaiting the fitting for my wedding dress," she gushed honestly.

"My lady, may the love between you and the Field Marshall help bring peace to the galaxy," the
seamstress showed her ring, the Resistance double ring. "I bring a message from your cousin. He wants to take you home."

"If Poe is on Coruscant, I have only one message for him. I am home. I am where the Force wants me to be, and I'll not leave the father of my child. Tell him I love him, but I'm not a baby anymore. He needs to go back to the Resistance. Alone."

"I'll let him know. As for what I think your plan might be, I have to say I approve. If you can teach Armitage Hux to love, and Rey can bring Ben Solo back from the darkness which is Kylo Ren, perhaps peace in the galaxy isn't a pipe dream."

After they left, Lyric tried to calm her thoughts down, focus on what she was about to do. She had no idea what she was about to allow Hux to do to her, but that didn't matter. Rey had to be at their wedding. She knew that as certain she knew her path was the one she was on. He punched the entry code fifteen minutes before they were due at lunch. She really hoped she knew what she was doing.

He walked into the living room, and she was seated on the edge of the couch, every inch of her throbbing with insecurity and anxiety. When she caught his eye, she stood and dropped the robe. Then dropped to her knees in a gracefully picture of submission.

"Welcome home."

*****

He didn't think he could breathe. He knew he couldn't think, all the blood in his body had just dropped to his cock, and the only thing he could think to do was to pull her up into his arms.

"No, no. You don't have to do that." He tried to kiss her but she pushed away.

"But you would like me to."

"Yes, but.."

"No buts. How do you want me to wait for you when I can?"

How did he answer that? He reviewed the situation. The woman he loved, about to be his wife, carrying his child, was asking if he wanted her submissive. There was only one answer.

He stepped closer, gently correcting her posture, which was still awkward with the brace on her ankle. Once she had it perfect, he pulled her up, only then noticing her clothes. He glanced at his watch. They only had ten minutes. He reached for her, only for her to dance away.

"Not right now you only get to look, Armi. Now I'm going to get dressed, over this outfit, and we're going to have lunch with whatever group or whoever they have us scheduled with, and every time you see me talking to one of your men, one of those insignificant politicians who are trying to get to you by playing up to me, you'll know that underneath, I'm wearing this, thinking of your hands on my body, your lips on my cunt. They'll be seeing Lyric Bey Hux, dancer, kidnap victim, but you'll know what I really am."

"And what is that?" He growled, possessiveness claiming his senses at last.

"Yours. Only yours."

They had seven minutes, and he only needed five.
Lessons

Chapter Summary

In the midst of the chaos before the wedding, there is still time to learn.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'The Story'
Brandi Carlise

Chapter Fourteen - Lessons

The interviewer simpered her next query. "How did you and the Field Marshall meet?"

If they asked her that questions one more time, she might throw someone out a window. You can only tell a story so many times before it runs itself into the ground. However, with a large chunk of her past forbidden territory when the interviewers needed something they fell back on the old standbys.

"We met at the Opening Gala my first year as principle dancer. I was amazed by his eyes, and begged my patron, the ambassador from Serenno to introduce us. I was captivated by his intensity and his plans for the future."

"And your first impression Field Marshall?"

He smiled at her, bringing her fingertips up to lips. "It seemed a being of pure light had stepped out of the air. I've been caught up in her radiance ever since."

"You have no family, Lady Hux, so no one to stand up with you at the ceremony?"

"Actually, a dear friend of mine will be standing as my maid, and the Supreme Leader will be Armitage's witness."

"It's to be in the rose gardens," the interviewer gushed. "How perfect for a wedding?"

"Yes," Hux replied. "We are quite honored by the mayor and city government for allowing us to use the gardens, and cannot thank them enough for their assistance will all the details."

It was near dinner time, and Lyric had just about decided to cancel the whole wedding fiasco, sign the paperwork and submit it to the authorities. She'd smiled until her face hurt, and her head hurt from the effort of withholding her more sarcastic comments. Luckily this was the last interview for
the day, and she only hoped they ended right on time.

They returned to their apartments, and Lyric headed straight for the kitchen for something to raise her blood sugar. Once she'd taken the vitamin C pack, she looked up to see him smiling at her. For some reason it reminded her of a cat playing with a mouse it'd caught.

"You forgot something, my love."

He crossed the room to her side, pulling her skirt up and sticking his gloved fingers between her legs. Bringing the fingers to her mouth, he stuck them inside until she'd cleaned herself off of them.

"I believe there was a promise made, in exchange for letting Ren's whore attend the wedding."

"Her name is Rey, and she is no whore."

"Immaterial. You made a promise."

"Yes, I did."

"And what does that mean to you?"

"I will learn whatever you want to teach me."

"Come with me."

He took her past their bedroom, to a locked door she had always assumed was a private office for Hux. Inside was a world she'd never imagined. At the threshold, he stopped her.

"Lyric, once we go forward I will not allow you to go back, so I'm going to ask one more time. Are you sure you want to do this?"

"Armi, you and I both know there will be times when I cannot be what you might need or want me to be. That's the downfall of loving a public entity. But you are my lord and husband, master of my heart, and I will embrace anything you can teach me that bridges our two worlds together. We can build something together that works for both our positions."

He pulled her toward the large bed set up on a platform at one side of the room. "There are many things I will not and cannot teach you while you're pregnant. But there are rules which will be in effect every time we are in this room. Do you understand?"

"Yes sir."

He raised one eyebrow at her.

"Yes master."

"The first rule is, you must listen before you speak. If you speak out of turn, then I will be forced to discipline you. If you persist, the punishment will increase until you see the error of your way. Nothing too harsh to start, but the more severe the transgression, the more the punishment. Again, you're carrying my child, and I will in no way risk you or the baby to satisfy my hungers."

"Yes master. By the way, you know I have problems with that terms, after what happened with Piccus. Could we work out between us different words that have the same connotation?"

Hus flexed his fingers, feeling once more that slime's windpipe crushing within them. "I understand. We'll work on this together, the right titles will make themselves known."
May I ask another question?"

"Proceed."

"What will my punishment be?"

He ran his fingertips along the swell of her breast. "I've decided that I will wait until you transgress, and then let the punishment fit the crime."

"The second rule," he continued sliding his hand between her legs and circling her clit with his thumb, "is that I control your pleasure. You don't come without my permission. So long as you behave, there will be no reason to withhold pleasure from you. Should you become too unruly, then I might have to get harsh."

She blushed furiously as her body built up pressure, longing for a release after a long day spent in a state of wetness dreaming on his hands and lips on her body. When he pulled his hand away and walked into the other room, she stared after him as though he'd lost his mind. He removed his coat and belt, settling down for their quiet dinner alone. Later there was a reception for them which he would attend with Ren, begging her regrets. She didn't need to be out half the night with her blood pressure still prone to bottom out.

He knew she was aggravated, knew she'd been wet all day. He'd been able to smell the unique scent of her all afternoon, and it'd only been years of patience and duty that had kept him from taking her a half a dozen times and ways. While she arranged their dinner on the table, he selected a wine for the evening, pouring Lyric a glass of fruit juice. She saw him set the juice at her place, and stared at him. Then she turned around and went into the bedroom, closing the door behind her.

He chased behind her, breaking through the door when she attempted to lock it against him. She narrowed her eyes at him.

"You need to eat."

"I shut the door because I want a moment alone."

Hux shook his head. "I tell you when you can be alone."

He ripped the dress from her shoulders, displaying her gift to him. He twisted a smile as he saw the slickness of her thighs, and her nipples were hard and ready for his mouth. His fingers ran through her folds, murmuring in her ear.

"So, how wet you are? I know you've been wet all afternoon. I smelled you. I've been hard through most of these meetings, and interviews. Knowing you're wet and ready, while trying to keep my hands off through all these appointments has been difficult."

She rubbed against his hand, still searching for the release he'd denied. He pulled away, smiling a little at the disappointed moan she released. Taking her hand, he walked to the table, pulling out a chair for her to sit.

"But first, you have to eat something. Doctor's orders."

He seated himself opposite her, but only pulled his glass of wine toward him, leaving the food untouched for the moment. She was graceful, the picture of a formal lady, even half-dressed with a pussy swollen red with need. He'd tried to wait, ease her into play. There was so much he didn't want to expose to her. At least, not yet. She hadn't pushed him
For some reason he didn't want to explore, a part of him wished she would.

When dinner was finished, he pulled her gently from her chair and kissed her. "My beautiful wife, what a goddess I've been gifted with."

Taking her hand, Hux led her back to the room. When he'd shut the door, her amber eyes turned to him, her face a mask of trust and love.

It was many hours later when they finally slept.
Chapter Summary

Armitage and Lyric tie the knot. Poe crashes the reception.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'The Wedding Song (There is Love)'
Noel Paul Stookey

Chapter Fifteen - Wedding Day

It was her wedding day, and all Lyric wanted to do was throw up. Which considering her deep-seated aversion to that particular activity, was an accomplishment. The previous evening Hux had been surrounded by his officers from Headquarters and told in no uncertain terms that he would not see his bride until the ceremony, some eighteen hours apart. She's wished him a fun evening and settled down to read.

Since shortly after that time, she'd been surrounded by women, most of them wives of other high-ranking officers and government officials, along with Bella. Since early this morning she'd been stripped of any dignity she might have, especially after the scars emerged as her clothes disappeared.

"Oh," Bella gave voice to what the group all wanted to know. "When Armitage told us you were injured in the war, none of us imagined it was so severe.

She took a deep breath and turned around to face the mirror, for the first time in months, and made an honest assessment of what she saw.

The eye was immediately pulled to her torso, and the still healing scars and skin graphs from the crash. There was a long incision along her spine, and scars of horrific pain. So this is what Armitage saw when he looked at her. Damage. Pain. Anger.

"There was a crash," she tried to explain. "The fire was immense, I was trapped until the chair ejected just before impact. The graphs are still new." She knew how inadequate that sounded, but didn't have the strength to go further into her nightmares.

While the women drew her bath and continued their chatter, only Rey noticed how quiet the bride had become. She managed to get the Jedi's eye, and pleaded with unspoken words for a moment to herself.

"Ladies, do you know if the dresses have arrived? We should make sure they are ready and not in
need of any last-minute alterations."

The women scrambled to their stations, leaving only Bella with Rey and Lyric.

Bella came and gently hugged her soon-to-be sister. "If you wanted privacy Lyric, you should ask aloud, not through your friend with that connection the rest of us don't have. It isn't polite."

Lyric stared at her. "You know about that?"

The older woman sniffed. "It doesn't take a genius to realize you two can speak without words. Rey seems to know exactly what you need next, and regardless of how long you've known each other, no one has that close of a friendship. But don't worry, I won't say anything, so long as Armitage knows."

She nodded. "I would never do something without the permission of my husband.

Then the ladies returned and it was time to get into the most important dress of her life. She put her mind into the same place she did whenever having to make a quick change behind the stage. She allowed her face to set into a serene mask, half smile, half annoyance, staring straight ahead as though they were not there. That way strangers looking at her body didn't freak her completely.

The dress was magnificent and highlighted her body in every way. The white lace bodice was really more of a white corset with a lace and toile skirt falling low on her hips near the top of her pubic bone. There were hundreds of crystals sewn into the skirt and corset. As she looked in the mirror she allowed herself for one moment to revel in the fact this was her wedding day.

At last, Rey told her it was time. Just as she gathered up her bouquet, Kylo Ren arrived to escort Rey down the aisle. In his hands were two jewelry boxes.

"From Armitage," Ren told her.

She opened the larger box. Inside was a beautiful black and gold collar with a giant amber stone hanging as a pendant. The other box contained matching cuffs. As she fastened them around her, she felt a chill run up her spine, an acknowledgement when she put these on and wore them before the universe, she was proclaiming who owned her, body and soul.

Ren helped her fasten the necklace, smiling at her as she smoothed the dress over her stomach, feeling under her own sensitive fingers for the tight knot of her baby. She would not throw up walking down the aisle. She would not embarrass Armitage in any way. With a quick check to make sure her make-up wasn't smudged, she nodded to Ren she was ready to go.

The crowd of invited dignitaries all rose as they entered the gardens. The trees and bushes had been transformed, with lights hanging from the branches and soft candles lit the altar with the scent of roses filling the air with their sweetness. Ren took Rey's arm, then winked at her as they took their place down the aisle. Every head swiveled in her direction. Every nerve in her body suffered from sudden stage fright and she poised on her toes to flee.

Then she saw his eyes. At the end of the aisle, those blue eyes, promising her it would be alright, to just come toward him. So she took a deep breath and put one foot forward, and then another. Each movement brought him closer, his eyes encouraging her when she would falter. Step by step she made her way through the assembled guests to stand at his side.

He took her hand, eyes never leaving her own. There was a man who told them to say the words, but she didn't know what they said. She was asked if she wanted to marry him.
"Oh, yes."

He smiled at that. Then gave his word too.

Then he slid a ring on her finger, a mate to the ring he'd already give her. Then someone said, "Kiss the bride."

He took her hands and pulled her in for a kiss. She let him decide how long, how appropriate it should be, this was his image they were crafting and she was an important part of the game.

Then it was done. They turned and faced the audience and she heard the pronouncement.

"Lords and ladies, citizens of the galaxy, may I present Field Marshall and Lady Armitage Hux."

The applause was heard everywhere, as it was being simul-cast to every corner of the galaxy. He folded her arm into his, and they walked back down the aisle, smiling to well-wishers along the way. Ren and Rey followed along behind and then they were whisked to the reception, a seated dinner for five hundred of the closest people she'd never met.

After dinner there was dancing, which she knew he'd added because she loved to dance. Since the last time, he apparently been taking lessons, and the two of them glided across the floor song after song, and her heart was lighter and happier than she'd thought possible. She even danced with Ren, who was graceful from all his sword training.

"Are you happy I managed to get Rey here?"

His eyes gleamed with happiness. The two of them had been together almost non-stop for the week, and she could tell he was dreading the parting. She loved the balance they brought to each other, as then her own system hummed along even as well.

Afterward, she was standing with Ren, Rey and Armitage basking in the happiness that surrounded her all the way down to her cells. Suddenly, a chill ran down her back. It felt as though someone was watching her. She looked across the crowd, searching until she found him.

Poe.

While the truce was still underway, she knew if Armitage recognized him, it was only a matter of time before he'd end up in a cell underneath the city and Lyric couldn't allow that.

"Rey, would you come with me to the ladies' room?"

Hux stirred. "Do you want us to escort you?"

She laid her hand on his cheek. "No, we'll be right back."

As they walked away, she whispered to Rey. "Poe is here, somehow. I need to see him, to get him the hell out of here before Armi sees him."

She took Rey around a corner to a coat room. "Bring him here. Quickly."

Waiting for him to arrival felt an eternity. She rubbed her stomach trying not to throw up the dinner she'd barely eaten. She hadn't even had cake yet.

"Bunny."

When she heard his childhood nickname for her, just like the code game required, the tears would
"Hi Buddy."

He took her hands, standing at arms' length. "Let me look at you. Gods you are the most beautiful bride in the galaxy, bar none."

"You're biased."

"Yes I am. Sorry to crash your wedding cos, but I just had to see for myself. Are you sure you aren't being brainwashed to stay with Hux?"

She could hear the band starting another tune. "Dance with me, Poe."

She knew he couldn't refuse. Rey stood guard on the door. She stepped into his embrace and they swayed to the dim beat as they stared into each other's eyes. For a long time, they simply looked and savored what she feared might be the last time they would ever see each other alive again. But all that was in the future. Right now, she was simply Lyric Bey asking her cousin to dance at her wedding. All the rest could wait for tomorrow. This was how she needed to say good-bye.

"I'm not brainwashed," she volunteered. "I know it doesn't make sense, but it makes sense for us. I'm really happy Poe, I'm not a prisoner. I love him, and he loves me too. Don't cry and think I've been coerced into something I didn't ask for. I'm a big girl, and I'm willing to accept my actions, Poe. Are you going to be alright with this?"

"Lyric, you're the only family I have left." He pulled her tighter, her head resting on his shoulder. "You're asking me to cut off a limb. I don't think I can do that."

"You have to Poe, at least until this war comes to a formal end. I love you more than a brother, you've done an amazing job of raising me, but it's time to let me go. Tell everyone I love them, and let them know I'll be pursuing the goals of the Resistance from the inside of headquarters instead of from an X-wing"

He opened his mouth to answer at the same moment Rey screamed inside her head.

"Lyric!"

Armitage opened the coat room door, two Storm troopers standing right behind him.

"Well, isn't this interesting."
Chapter Summary

For the first time, Hux's anger gets the best of him.

C/W - violence

Chapter Sixteen - Rage

He couldn't talk with her, not now. Not after finding her hiding in a closet with that fucking pilot, at their own damn wedding. The troopers removed Dameron from his sight, Lyric arguing every step of the way that as her cousin he had a right to be there. Hux had to walk away before he did something he'd regret. He'd already counted to three hundred and twenty-five when he found himself in front of a bar, where several of his officers were more than willing to do shots with the groom.

It felt good to let his anger steep in the fire of alcohol. He could see her across the room, arms around her waist while Ren stroked her back and Rey handed her tissues. That alone almost made him think about seriously hurting the Supreme Leader with a fast-right to the jaw. As if Ren heard his thoughts, he looked across the room, shaking his head to warn Hux something was off. He knew something was off all right, Poe Dameron was dancing with his fucking wife, in a coat room.

The more he consumed, the sharper the focus on his anger grew. She'd gone behind his back to meet with that Resistance piece of shit. She'd been disobedient, she'd lied to him. She needed to know her limits, especially when it came to his position as the head of the First Order military forces. Slamming the last shot (his sixth?), he stormed across the room.

Lyric lifted her head and looked at him, misery and sadness in every line of her being. But she was a performer, and the show wasn't over. It was time for he and his bride to leave for their wedding night.

"Ren, I need to do goodbyes for me. It's time for us to leave," he announced to her, along with Ren and Rey. He took her hand. She pulled against him. She dared to resist him after all this shit?

"Don't you want to say good-night to everyone?" Her voice was quiet and thin.

Whirling on her like a cobra, he hissed, "No, I do not want to say good night to anyone. You hid in a closet to see that Resistance bastard, behind my back. I simply want to get you back to our rooms and show you what happens when you disobey."

"You've been drinking."

"Not near enough to blot out the sight of Dameron with his hands around you."

"He's my family." Did she just dare to roll her eyes at him?

Hux's patience had reached its end. "I. Don't. Care. You are mine, you wear my collar, and you
dare to go behind my back and meet with Resistance members. Are you a traitor? Or are you that stupid?"

As soon as the words left his mouth he knew they were the wrong ones. Lyric had a borderline genius IQ. Her eyes hardened, and her shoulders squared up. "What the hell did you just say to me?"

Ren wisely steered the two of them out of the reception and into his speeder, Rey following them. Once inside Hux stared out the window, anger boiling just beneath his skin. Lyric stared straight ahead, daggers in her eyes for everyone. They reached the spaceport and the two of them boarded a shuttle to take them to their honeymoon cottage on a nearby resort moon.

Ren and Rey left for their own adventure. Neither Armitage nor Lyric spoke to the other the rest of the trip, a wall of ice between them. Once inside their suite, Lyric took one of the bedrooms and locked herself inside. Hux availed himself of the bar, refortifying his anger against her. When he could take the locked door no long, cold, merciless bastard Hux came out to claim what he wanted.

She wanted to play games? Well by the gods, he could play too.

He burst through the door after taking the control panel down with blaster fire, only to find her in a heap on the bed, dress crushed, sobs shaking her entire body, weeping soundlessly. She'd washed off the make-up and let her hair down, giving her a curtain to hide behind. He pulled her up by her elbows.

"You don't ever get to lock me out." He spat his anger at her like javelins. "You promised to behave and it's our wedding night. I don't want to be the bad guy here, but you fucked up sweetheart. You broke your promise and met with Dameron, right in our midst, you met with your filthy Resistance cousin. You need to remember, you belong to me. You do as I decide."

He pulled her to him, lips forcing onto hers, tongue thrusting itself into her mouth. Moving his hips against her so she could feel the steel shaft in his pants. He was very drunk and couldn't figure out how to get the dress off, so he took a utility knife from his belt and starting ripping. As soon as her breasts were free, he threw the knife so it stuck in the wall behind her. He then grabbed a breast in each hand.

"These are mine," he growled, sucking each nipple hard then rubbing his thumbs across the highly sensitive flesh. "The only things that'll suck these are me or my children."

She tried to hit him, with both hands. He grabbed her wrists.

"Not this time. You promised."

He ripped the rest of her skirt off, exposing the frilly undergarments to her outfit. He barely acknowledged them, ripping them from her body, then plunging his middle finger into her cunt with no warning. She was dry, of course and the hiss of her pain registered with Hux, he just didn't acknowledge it. She was hurt and angry, and he'd had enough alcohol to not care.

He curled his finger inside her. "This also is mine. Only I will enter, and by the gods only my children had better come out, or I will pull your womb out with my bare hands."

He grabbed her wrists as she twisted around in his grasp, trying to kick him or break free. Hux was disinclined to allow either, so he pulled her over to the bed. He sat on the edge, then draped her across his legs, positioned so her belly hung between his knees untouched. He took off his belt, doubled it over then swatted her ass. Hard. Probably harder than he intended, but he certainly
couldn't take it back now.

The shock caused Lyric to twist frantically, struggling with all her energy to break free. That only brought another stroke with the belt. He felt her body flush with anger and endorphins and decided this was a good time.

He leaned over closer to her ear.

"Here's how this works, love. You're going to lay there and take this punishment until you surrender and admit you were wrong to disobey me. Then this unpleasantness will end, and I'll see how many times I can make you come on our wedding night. If you persist in fighting against me, then this will continue until I decide otherwise.

"Do you understand your choices?"

"Fuck you Armi, he's my family."

Whack, whack. Two more stripes added themselves to her ass. He took his hand and smoothed the red skin under the cool leather glove.

"Are you ready to apologize?"

"I didn't do anything wrong."

Whack. This time as he smoothed her skin, he slipped his fingers down her slit, feeling the wetness now flowing from her in waves.

"See love, your body knows the truth. Don't you want to come?"

"Yes," she could barely speak. He could hear the need in her voice.

"Are you sorry?"

"I'm sorry."

He chuckled. "That's not what you say."

"I'm sorry, sir."

Hux pulled her off his lap, then freed himself from the formal pants he'd worn to the wedding. He slid inside her tightness with a sigh of contentment. "I will never grow tired of watching my cock disappear into your pussy. Gods you're so tight."

He pulled out and slipped his fingers through her juices to capture them, used the wetness to press his thumb against the pucker of her ass. When she tightened, he'd rubbed her low back.

"Relax, love. I won't take this part of you tonight. Maybe not even tomorrow. But I will one day, and you will come to love me in that hole as much as the one I fill now."

She panted with need, twisting her pelvis trying to rub herself against something to satisfy her need to peak. He wrapped his hand in her hair, pulling her head back so he could run his tongue along her neck.

"But right now, I'm going to fuck my wife. I can't promise to be gentle, because I'm still very angry. But apparently you need to be reminded that this," he twirled a finger around her clit, "belongs to me. As does this," sliding fingers in her pussy, "and even this." He rubbed his glove
hand across her bright red ass.

"Every hole you have belongs to me love. You accepted my collar, you are mine."

With that he threw her face down on the bed, then pulled her ass up into the air, using pillows to help keep pressure off her stomach. Then he entered her pussy again with one long straight thrust and she shook all over as the zing of his anger shot through her. Once inside her, he leaned closer to her ear, kissing and sucking along her neck and shoulders.

He thrust harder and faster than he might have if he'd hadn't been drunk. A small corner of his mind knew she didn't deserve the pounding he was giving her, but whenever he tried to pull back, all he could see was Poe Dameron's arms on her. Cousin or not, another man's arms around his wife would never be acceptable.

"Are you sorry?" His voice seemed to fill her head, all her senses until she was surrounded with his scent and his power over her.

"Yes sir."

He rocked himself against her tight, then pulled out before slamming back into her, hitting that magic spot within as he did so. Then he began thrusting faster and faster, chasing that release point that would make everything sane again. Just as he felt the walls of her flutter and pulse around his cock, he came, shouting her name like a prayer. When at last the shudders stopped, he was surprised to discover that he felt empty. Pulling out, he rolled over to his back, breathing hard.

She slid next to him, both of them reeling from the aftershocks. He had no words to express the morass of his thoughts.
Chapter Summary

Lyric regains her old life, and Armitage issues an apology.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Gravity'
Sara Bareilles

Chapter Seventeen - Rehearsals

She awoke in the morning alone, his side of the bed cold. She was sore all over, and between her thighs ached and burned. Then she noticed she was sleeping in their bedroom, not the private hotel suite where he'd done things to her she preferred not to think about. Thinking of them would make them real, and she wasn't sure she wanted to acknowledge the way her body reached to his dominance over her. It confused her.

Hux must have brought them home while she was 'sleeping', his favorite term for drugging her. End of honeymoon.

The ever-present nausea she kept at bay with the crackers and carbonated water the room steward now stocked beside the bed. She was sure word would leave the palace soon that Lady Hux was pregnant. The bubble would burst, and the game of public scrutiny she'd hated since first exposed as a teenager would begin all over again.

Dressing in leotard and tights, she stretched herself by using the Force to move the furniture around until a large open space in which to work appeared. She tuned the holovid to music from Serenno she recognized from her childhood. With the music filling the room, she closed her eyes to visualize and began to dance.

The pain in her body disappeared when she stretched her hands forth in graceful supplication as the music lifted her past herself, to a point where the two fused into one and she saw the phrasing and notes as tags in the Force, and she stepped along them using each one to propel herself further into the balance of light and dark, motion and rest, force and peace, until she felt like herself again, one being, one soul, one knowledge.

The song finished, and she heard a slow clapping behind her. "When they said to me my Lyric was found, I said no. A fat nerf perhaps, or a skeleton, but never my Lyric, my perfect child. I should have known. You are Lyric Bey; perfection is as natural to you as breathing."

She spun on her toes to address the voice behind her. "If I am Lyric, then it is only because you are"
Madam Izzerah, the greatest teacher in the galaxy, and you have taught me everything I know."

The required greeting given and the correct response, Lyric was happy her artistic master from the ballet remember the code game. She allowed another layer of her defense levels to relax. She curtsied deeply to the woman who had saved her from the excessive anger of the ballet's previous master. When Izzerah discovered the perversions of Master Piccus, the first thing she'd done was pull Lyric under the protection of her own house. She'd made sure Lyric weathered the storm with minimal damage and scars.

Madam Izzerah was shorter than Lyric, but regal with snow white hair and blue eyes that were either laughing or cold as ice. She'd been a dancer for almost fifty years, and though she was no longer spry, her talent for finding exceptional dancers was unparalleled in the galaxy. She examined Lyric with those cold eyes, tallying up the cost of three years of no dancing and eight months recovering from an impossible accident.

"Let me look at you," the older woman used her cane to lightly wrap on her legs. "That ankle must get stronger. Start wearing weights when you are alone. It will never bear up if you don't start now."

"Yes Madam."

She narrowed her eyes at her waist. "Broken back, no problem. Those imbeciles on the star ship knew what they were doing with the back. You still have much core strength. But I think the problem is more one I cannot fix with lesson or cane?"

"I'm going to have a baby, madam." That simple admission suddenly derailed her. "I have no idea what I'm doing."

Izzerah narrowed her black eyes and grabbed Lyric's jaw with her fingers. Turning the girl's head this way and that, she examined the bruises she found.

"How can you love this man, who marks your flesh so carelessly?"

"I deserved to be punished. I deceived him, lied and went behind his back."

"And if he hits you and there is no reason?"

Lyric shook her head vehemently. "He would never."

"Lyric, you are as my own daughter. Let me give you a small word of advice. You may do with it as you wish. I remember this man from before. This man has tried twice to kill you. Now he has you as his bride, and no law will prevent him from doing to you as he wishes. Do not be a pretty cunt in a dress. Be fierce, be Lyric, be what he needs but do not lose yourself in his pain. There is no road to redemption from that path."

She threw her arms around Izzerah. "I know, and I will not let this become the end of me."

"Good. Then you will join private class of my pets each morning from seven until lunch."

"Are you sure I'm ready for your class? I was thinking maybe start with the children until I get my feet under me again."

"Pssh," Izzerah dismissed her fears like raindrops. "You are Lyric Bey. What is substandard for you is still exceptional for everyone else. You will see. Dance is like breathing, you cannot forget how to do it. Now, here is the holo with all the selections for your first performance. With baby,
we will have to go soon, say six weeks from now. That makes you three moons. Perfect time to reintroduce Lyric Bey Hux and to announce new addition to family. Yes?"

"Yes madam."

Hux didn't come home for lunch. She decided to indulge at the spa she'd frequented when she lived here previously. They were overjoyed to see her and insisted on giving her a facial and a two-hour massage. At dinner, she received a message he'd been called to Headquarters for an urgent meeting. She showered, braided her hair, pulled on an old wool sweater and some warm socks and went to bed. All she succeeded in doing was flopping from one side to the other in frustration.

She pulled on a pair of leggings and opened the balcony doors, walking onto the balcony to breathe the night air. It was quiet outside, and Lyric felt as though she was the only person awake on the entire planet. Examining the tree next to the building, she realized she could climb down and talk a walk through the fragrant grasses without having to traipse through half the building alerting dozens to her insomnia.

Upon reaching the ground, she ran lightly across the wet field, leaping and dancing to her own internal song. While her husband was angry and probably going to leave her already, she was happy, anxious to grow into her new position, anxious to dance again with the Company, anxious to be a mother.

She curled up in the grass and looked up to space, wishing for stars, or clouds, but getting shuttles moving from spaceports to massive liners high above the city. She allowed her mind to drift back to the first time she'd been allowed to pilot, sitting on Aunt Shara's lap leaving the atmosphere above Yavin 4, still remembered that bottom of her stomach feeling that came from seeing nothing by open stars ahead of her. Endless possibilities.

When she'd joined the Resistance, Poe had been there for her solo, the first time the stage fright of her dance career took ahold and she'd been frozen with fear unable to jump away with the rest. That quiet, deep, steady voice encouraging her to face that fear, step on top of it and climb to the next level of who she could be. Daring her to race the gathering storms and finally find her place in the galaxy, she'd discovered the gypsy in her soul had no fear, except of being bound to a planet like a broken bird, never to soar again.

Rain began softly falling, wetting her hair, slicking her sweater to her skin. She lifted her face to the sky, letting the water wash away the pain of Hux's rejection. She'd tried to give him exactly what he wanted, and while Rey and Ren were together at last, she was sitting alone in the rain, wondering to where in the galaxy her husband might have run away. What was wrong that he'd rejected her?

She knew she could be naïve, it didn't bother her. Lyric tended to see everything in life as learning experiences. Her track record for success in anything she'd attempted was almost perfect, and to discover that what her husband wanted most from her wasn't one of them was bitterly disappointing. Because he was very good at it. She'd felt everything he told her she would, he told her exactly what to do and what was going to happen, and she'd tried with every fiber of her being to get it right. Her last conscious memory of last night was of feeling balanced and sated. She had no idea why he'd brought them home under cover of dark.

The best part of rain, she decided walking slowly back toward the palace, was it mixed with tears so no one who saw her would recognize she was crying. As she approached the tree to climb back up, she had to wait under the tree line before the patrol went by to escape detection. She climbed back up the way she went down, emerging onto the balcony in time to see Hux coming out of their room with a look of mad panic.
"Where the fuck have you been?" He spat the words at her and grabbed her by the shoulders, shaking hard.

For some reason, that was the straw that broke her.

"Where have 'I' been? Where have you been? I woke up alone, no word, no nothing."

"Don't you dare turn this on me."

In a huff, she tried to slid past him but he pulled her to him again. "Don't walk away from me either."

She whirled toward him, and in the light the bruises on her face and neck were clearly visible. He blinked slowly, reaching out to her cheek to touch the bright purple bruise. She flinched and stepped backward.

"Don't touch me."

Something in his eyes crumbled. "Lyric, is this all?"

Her hands snatched her sweater off, showing the bruises and bite marks that covered her neck, shoulders, and arms. On her back and legs were large bruises from his belt. She refused to look at him, refused to meet his eyes.

He tried to hug her, but she slid out from under his grasp. While he stood there, she turned and headed for the shower. She turned the water as warm as possible, her skin too sensitive for the heat she wanted. Once it was bearable she stood underneath and let it hide her from the world.

A few minutes later, Hux stepped into the shower, not trying to crowd her, but still closer than she wanted. She tried to shrink into the wall, his hands capturing her against the cool tile as his eyes bored holes into the top of her head. The cold against the raw skin brought a gasp to her lips. He tipped her head up, forcing her to meet his eyes.

The blue of his eyes reminded her of pools of rain, the sorrow in them deep. "I'm sorry. I lost control and I'm sorry."

He wouldn't let her run away. His lips began gently kissing the bruises on her face and neck, and his hands massaged the soap over body as he rubbed her stomach, and arms. The anger insider her wouldn't let the tears fall, they had a mind of their own filling her eyes and running over of their own accord.

Once he'd dried her off, he wrapped her inside the over-sized black towel and carried her with him toward the bedroom. She still wouldn't look at him, unless he forced her to, unable to say the things she wanted to, unable to accept this was probably the only apology she'd get from Armitage for beating up his pregnant wife. But she'd make sure he remember.

Once he slept, she crept into medical and had her injuries assessed, along with the notation she was six weeks pregnant. Then she locked the information in a private folder, after sending a copy of Hux's email.

It was time Lyric Bey won one.

*****

The next morning, he was sitting in a chair in the bedroom when she woke up.
"We have to talk."

"Yes Armi, I think we do."

"What happened, the other night, I overreacted to your cousin showing up at the wedding. But you hid it from me, made me look a fool."

"He's my cousin."

"No one knows that. All they know is that the Field Marshall's wife was in the arms of a Resistance pilot at her own FUCKING wedding."

It was then she realized how tenuous his hold on the anger. His nostrils were flared, and his gloved hands were clenched against his legs. He was abnormally still, and for the first time Lyric saw the Hux most of the galaxy feared.

With deliberate care she slid up in the bed, her eyes never leaving his. She chewed on the inside her of her lip, wondering which direction this would go.

"I am sorry I didn't let you know Poe was at the wedding. I panicked."

"Yes, you did."

"I made a poor decision. How can I make this right?"

"We're not at the making it right stage yet. I'm still at the you lied to me point." His eyes streamed frost toward her.

Lyric sighed, "I told Poe never to seek me again. I told him my place was here at your side. I have no allegiance to anyone but you. He wasn't happy but I am content. I got to say good-bye. I will accept any further punishment you want to give, but each time I require medical care I will record it. Not to hold as blackmail, to remind you when you forget your promises to protect me."

"I did not mean for last night to hurt either of us. I let my anger rule my passion, and you were caught in the middle. I am ashamed of letting it go so far."

"Madam Izzerah was here, she asked me if you would ever mark me for no reason. I couldn't assure her you would not."

"I will meet with her, reassure her this was an aberration." His face was calm, set.

She stood from bed, going to the drawer to pull out fresh leotard and tights. As she began dressing, she noticed his hands still clenched against his thighs. He watched her like a hunter stalking prey. While always an intense person, this morning he was uptight and stressed by his own internal conflicts.

"Where are you going?" A corner of his mouth had the temerity to quirk into a smile.

"To the conservatory. Madam is adding me to her pets, and they dance every morning. If I hurry I can grab some fruit before we begin."

"May I come watch?"

She stood after grabbing her toe shoes from a chest under the bed. "I have no problems, so long as you remember to be quiet. Madam doesn't allow questions in her classes, only acknowledgements."
"I promise."

He held her cloak, then escorted her to their speeder. They stopped at a small vendor's cart before the conservatory, grabbing frozen fruit in cups and large bottles of glacier water imported from Hoth. They approached the rehearsal hall where Madam reigned as the queen of dance. Several dancers she remembered were gathered around the older woman when Hux and Lyric entered.

The old woman rapped the heel of her cane against the hardwood floor. "Look pets. My precious Lyric has returned to us through fire and pain, and now she will dance among us again, just as we have hoped for so long. Welcome home, my Lyric. Come. We dance."

Hux took a seat in the corner as she joined the elite performers in several hours of both choreography and free dance. She ignored him as she threw herself into the thrill of motion and the collective energy of the group. All the dances Izzerah promised for her return were put through the paces, adjustments made for couplings, and a few moves that had to be adjusted for Lyric's physical problems. Overall Lyric just allowed herself to meld with the others' energies in the group until the exacting artistic mistress was satisfied.

"Come, pets, sit. Now I will show you why my Lyric is who she is. This is Lyric's song, and she will close the gala with her song."

Izzerah began to play a composition she'd not heard since she was fourteen. It was the song she'd danced to when she auditioned six years previous. A tribal tune with subtle counter melodies that always brought out the beast in Lyric. She became fluid, liquid, the Force in motion, whatever the viewer desired, Lyric represented that climax of want for them. As she jumped, she felt the heart of a stag running through a distant forest, when she crept across the floor, she was a loth cat stalking its prey. By the time the song ended, everyone watching felt both worn out and refreshed.

The madam limped with her cane until she stood before the prostrate form of her favorite, panting heavily. Kneeling she pulled Lyric up, purring at her as she did, while the older woman's eyes burned holes into Hux.

"My love, my child. You are Lyric. Men will always want to own you, women will always wish to be you, and you, child of music and motion, you will make them all fall before your feet. Just as before."

Then she walked out of the room to continue her day.

*****

He waited until the others had left the rehearsal hall before approaching her. She was wiping down her face and changing into flat shoes for the trip home.

"I see now what you mean about dedication to perfection. I've never seen anything like that before. Where did you learn to do that?"

She shrugged. "When I dance, I open my heart to the Force and let the music move through me and out the way it intends. I don't think I ever learned the steps, my heart showed me what the steps needed to be."

"It's beautiful. Just like you."

Lyric blushed furiously. "Don't be nice if you don't mean to be nice."

He laughed. "That makes no sense, love."
She threw the towel down, stomping her foot like a child. "You hurt my feelings, Armi. I offer myself to you, totally willing to let you make me into whatever you wanted, and you rejected me, left me. What did I do wrong?"

He threw his head down, before taking her chin in his hand. "Nothing you did was wrong, love. It's me. When I saw Dameron, I lost all perspective and took that out on you. Also, I think I got really drunk. Not a good thing, ask Ren. The last time I was seriously drunk was after our 're-training' from Snoke following the loss of Star-killer. And I'm sorry you think I was rejecting you. I awoke and saw those bruises and I couldn't face you, especially in light of knowing I was in the wrong."

"Where did you go?"

"To the training center to watching Phasma testing some new special assault forces. And before you say anything you know she's not interested in men. Hell, she's had a thing for you in secret for years."

"Why go?"

"Because it got too real and I ran. I'm not proud to admit it, but I panicked and I ran."

She grabbed her workout bag, wrapped herself in her cloak and allowed him to escort her to their speeder. Before entering, she laid a hand on his arm. He looked at her, one eyebrow raised.

"There's a lovely little cafe two blocks over where some of the dancers go after practice. Would you like to grab a small bite or some tea?"

He smiled, "I'd love to."

As they walked down the crowded streets, he kept her tucked tight to his side, two Death troopers guarding them from a discreet distance. The cafe wasn't crowded, and they sat at a table near the window, ordering a large pastry to share and a caf for Hux, tea for Lyric. They talked about the dances, when the performance was scheduled, and how to make the announcement of her pregnancy.

"How long will Izzerah let you dance?"

"Until I fall over out of balance. Doctors all say to continue what your body is used to doing, but I have no intensions of showing my moo-wide hips at seven or eight months pregnant. No, once I begin to show, I'll take up Ren's offer of cultural ambassador until I'm too big to travel. Then once the baby is here, we'll see what happens."

"I want you to be happy, Lyric. I'll do whatever needs done to make sure you're happy in this life you've chosen. You and the baby will want for nothing."

"Unless the Resistance suddenly defeats the First Order, and then we all die as war criminals." Her gaze was hard, as if she'd thought this line of probability to its conclusion more than once.

"That will not happen. Ren and I will make sure that does not happen. There is room for the Resistance in the government we are building, but not for their brand of violence. Violence will be our last line when negotiations fall."

He paid the check and they began to stroll along the street, just being together. No one recognized them without the First Order uniform, and Lyric even laid her head on his shoulder, not fully forgiving, but willing to move forward. As they climbed into the speeder, Hux decided he would continue her training one day at a time. There were bound to be bumps in the road. She was too
independent to be completely submissive, but they would create something that worked for both of them. Maybe after the baby came...
Opening Night

Chapter Summary

Lyric dances again

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion:
'Take Me to Church'
Hozier

Chapter Eighteen - Opening Night

She stood backstage, apart from the other performers, waiting for the opening notes of the prelude. Six weeks of intense, crippling rehearsals and now it was time to put everything to the test.

Opening night of the Coruscant Ballet Gala Season, starring its guest ballerina – Lyric Bey-Hux and the house was packed. Kylo Ren was in the Imperial Box, along with Rey, and Armitage. She felt like an enormous balloon had settled in her stomach and the nerves were rearing up like giant vultures beating around her ears.

Suddenly in her head she heard both Ren and Rey reminding her of how much they loved her and that Armitage was so proud of her he was beaming as the galaxies' ultra-elites fell all over themselves to talk with the leaders of the First Order. That made her smile, picturing the scene and Arm'i’s bored look that he did so well.

Then it was time, and the first notes played. For the next two and one-half hours she let herself feel nothing but her place in the universe and the music. By intermission she was humming with the balance of the Force and her own happiness. She stood in the wings for a moment, trying to catch his eye, only to be mildly irritated by the crowd around the Imperial box.

The second part was the individual performances, climaxing with Lyric performing her piece. The costume to that selection was a new creation, as this was a dance she'd never done in public, and the leotard and tights she'd auditioned in were the required black and white, unsuitable for a public gala.

Instead, Madam Izzerah decided to highlight who Lyric was, a mystic creature in tune with a power not everyone could understand. Her hair was loose, free to billow around her head as a cloud. Heavy kohl around her eyes showed the cat-ness and the lip stain matched the deep amber of her eyes. Around her neck was a thick steel collar, with chains attached to her wrists and waist. The sheer gauze that covered her hid a flesh covered body suit, so it looked like all she wore was gauze and chains. As the music started she looked up, meeting Hux's eye through the darkness that comprised the night past the footlights.
She poured her soul into the words, dancing for his eyes only, willing him to hear that which no one knew, to know why this was considered Lyric's song. She prayed for him to listen to the words, and know her heart.

"I should have worshiped her sooner; If the heavens ever did speak."

She forgave him for the bruises which were only now fading.

"The only heaven I'll be sent to; Is when I'm alone with you."

She apologized for not trusting him about Poe, and she'll never doubt him again.

"I was born sick but I love it; Command me to be well."

She offered herself again to her husband, willing to follow him wherever he wished.

By the time the song was finished, she was spent in a heap on the stage. The applause was deafening, and flowers were thrown to the stage by the arm load, but Lyric had eyes for one person only. As she looked up to find him, their eyes met and he inclined his head in silent acknowledgment of her apologies and to offer his own. She nodded and smiled, then knelt to pick up a bouquet of flowers.

She pulled one perfect rose out, smelled it, then threw it out back to the audience. Everyone was on their feet and she bowed deeply and reverently as the company come out for curtain calls. When Lyric left the stage, she looked everywhere for one of three faces: Ren, Rey or Hux All three arrived in short order, parting the crowds with their personal magnetism.

Ren took her hands and kissed her on both cheeks, Rey hugged her tight and gushed on and on about the entire evening. However, the Supreme Leader and his partner were soon overwhelmed congratulating other members of the troupe. She noticed Armitage was extremely quiet until they reached her dressing room.

"Well, now that we're alone, what did you really think?"

Hux smiled, "It was the most amazing performance I've ever seen. They will be lining up out the doors for tickets."

She took several warm cloths and wiped the heavy stage make-up from her face. "I'm glad the next two weeks are standard classic ballet. Modern interpretation is exhausting. And I'm not too certain how much longer I'll be in any condition to have Kiran throwing me in the air."

Hux sniffed as he sat in the arm chair in her space. "I'm glad for some favors."

"Don't be that way," she snickered. "Kiran is a fabulous partner, and his husband thinks so as well."

Removing her shoes after a performance was always painful. They tended to become part of her skin and removing them always brought blood as the blisters popped and skin ripped, making Hux's eyes widen. Her assistant brought in a bowl with an antiseptic wash and she stuck both feet inside, sighing with contentment at the pain relief.

"Papers are out!" They could hear the stage manager calling out to let everyone know the critic's reviewers were now available for reading. Even though all news came through the holonet, some traditions die hard in the world of artists.

"Lyric Bey-Hux made her triumph return to the Coruscant Ballet this evening, at their Opening
Night of Modern Dance, and this reporter will never be the same again. Under the watchful eye of husband, Field Marshall Armitage Hux, along with the Supreme Leader and his partner the Lady Rey, Lyric and the rest of the company set up this season as an exploration of dance in all its forms. Her kidnapping and horrific accident may have set this talented beauty back, but the newly married Lyric showed her best days are just beginning, and we cannot wait to return to see more of this gifted ballerina's magic."

After shaking hands with everyone and hugs all around, Lyric and Hux set out back to their apartments, Ren and Rey going off in their own speeder. Lyric stared out the window, tired but still rising the wave of happiness that always followed a good performance.

"Are you happy?" Armitage asked.

"Yes, very happy. What about you?"

He pulled her into his arms, kissing the top of her head. "I never thought I would enjoy being planet-bound, but I'm enjoying every moment spent with you. It makes it feel like the war is a distant memory, not an ongoing process."

While he'd only returned to work three weeks previous, he was already up to his ears with what he'd termed to Lyric as, ridiculous ideas and stupid requests. He brought paperwork home, reading during dinner and late into the night as she fell asleep hard and early. Both of them felt they were missing something in their relationship, but neither could put words to their unhappiness.

The next morning the ballet released another announcement:

"It is with deepest pride, the Ballet Company of Coruscant congratulates Madam Lyric Bey-Hux on a successful opening gala and upcoming dance season. Due to medical restrictions, Lady Hux will not dance at all performances, so please check our online calendar for the latest schedules."

This prompted an announcement from the office of the Field Marshall:

"Field Marshall and Lady Hux are pleased to announce they are expecting a child in approximately six moons."

Gifts, cards, and flowers began arriving while she was still asleep. It was almost noon before she rang for tea and biscuits. There was a message from Madam Izzerah informing her the entire calendar was sold out for the season, and for her to take the day off. There was also a message from Hux, informing her he would be home at mid-day and they would spend the afternoon together.

She headed to the fresher then opened the closet to see what would be appropriate for lunch, and settled for a simple black dress with a long sweater overcoat. As she finished tying her boots, he walked in for lunch.

She smiled, "Welcome Home."

"Yes, the husband of 'Lyric Bey' is here, hurrah."

"I detect a mountain of sarcasm there."

He sighed heavily and leaned against her, foreheads touching. "Do you know how many calls my office has handled today with suck ups wanting to tell me how magnificent you were? Some were stupid enough, or bold enough to discuss you in terms which no man should describe another man's wife. I've almost asked Ren to Force choke half of the planet."
Lunch arrived and she set the table as he grabbed iced juice for both of them.

She smiled behind his back. "That wouldn't win the First Order many converts."

"Lyric, if one more man slaps me on the back and mentions how lucky I must be to have a wife who is so flexible and limber, I may kill them myself just to bring peace to my soul. You are never allowed to wear that costume again; do you understand me?"

"Sorry."

He smiled at her. "Sorry for what? Being perfection in human form? No, while it upsets me that half the men on this planet want to fuck you, watching you dance again was a dream I was afraid would never happen. But I'm serious about that costume."

"Do you have time to go with us to the doctor tomorrow morning? If not I understand."

"I already cleared my calendar."

They ate the rest of lunch in silence. Since their disastrous wedding night, Hux had not touched her in any way other than a kiss good night. Many nights he'd been tied up at the office and could only call. Several times she'd caught herself reaching for him, only to roll away, determined not to be the one to cave. He ran away from her, he needed to make the motion to rebuild their relationship.

After they finished lunch, she grabbed a cloak and make to leave.

"Where are you going?"

"For a walk, it helps relax me, ease my sore muscles after a performance night. Would you like to go?"

He stood and walked up close, using his larger size to crowd her against the wall. "I don't want to go for a walk."

She tried to play as if it were nothing. "Oh well, I won't be long. We can talk when I return."

He placed one hand on each side of her body, pressing himself against her. She could feel the steel hardness of his cock against her stomach, and instantly she was flooded with need. Looking up at him from under her lashes, she noticed blue eyes that were black with his own desire, and she slid her thighs against each other, trying to act normal though she knew he could probably smell the desire filling her.

"I don't want to talk, and I don't want you to leave."

He crushed his lips against hers, a wave of passion crashing over them as she slid her arms around his neck pulling him to her. His hands picked her up and before she knew it they were on the couch, clothes flying in all directions.

Maybe it was the long dry spell, or maybe it was the pregnancy hormones, or maybe it was knowing hundreds of men desired her, but she could not get enough of him. For the first time in a while, she allowed herself to just feel, just let the sensation pull her into a state of sexual frenzy. The heat of his mouth on her skin, the pressure of his fingers as they stroked her core, the weight of his body holding her beneath him, the strength of his cock as it pressed into her all melded into one heated, intoxicating sensation.

He pressed further, until his pubic bone rubbed against her own. She rolled her hips, trying to push
straight into the release her body sought. She heard him chuckle against her neck.

"Not this time, love. You need to know what you do to me. Why it angers me so much when men confide their desire of you. I don't share what belongs to me."

He pulled back slightly before sliding in again. "You are so tight, I dream of my cock being squeezed by that tightness until I explode. I sit in endless meetings, with saggy old men droning on and on about facts and figures, and all I see is you, always you. Legs spread, beautiful pink cunt glistening with juice, and it's all I can do not to come in my pants."

He took her leg in his hand, brought it up until it draped over his shoulder, kissing the inside of her leg. "I want to wrap myself around you, bury my cock in your warmth and forget everything else. To hell with the casualties."

"So, I'm going to give in to my wants for once, love." His voice quietly urged her on. "I'm going to fuck you until you can't walk, then we're going out for this diplomatic function. You're not going to wear any underthings, and if I want to bend you over anytime tonight, you will take me in you willingly and then I'll fuck you, knowing everyone is wondering where we've disappeared. Do you understand."

Thinking about what he was saying, how exposed she would be tonight, drove her over the edge. Everything went white, and the only sensations she could feel was Hux driving his cock deeper and deeper. She screamed as her body shuddered and rippled with the strength of her orgasm. He moaned her name loudly, and she felt the heat of his juice flood her inside.

He collapsed beside her, breathing heavily. She turned her head and looked at him. Eyes closed, arm thrown over his head, he panted as he attempted to calm his racing heart.

"I am sorry, about Poe."

He opened his eyes, looked at her and nodded. "I am too. Let's just let it go and move on. I only ask you not meet with any more Resistance members, family or not."

"I promise."

"Now, let's rest. The dinner tonight will be a long, boring political mess, so we both need to be sharp."

"Will Ren be there?"

"No, Ren and Rey are off world on some Force business. You and I will be representing the First Order. If this dinner goes well, then we can rest assured the Inner Core planets will fall in line without the need for an excessive show of military might. Snoke kept these people in line by the force of his personality, but they don't see Ren or me as prepared for this responsibility."

"Then we show them they're wrong. How can I help?"

He kissed her forehead. "Simply by being you."

The dress Hux picked for her to wear was perfect. Underneath was a flesh colored, fitted sheath that fell just below the curve of her ass. Over it were panels of black lace and leather, slit on each side to her hips. It also highlighted a very small, but noticeable, baby bump. As she turned around, she noticed Armitage held the jewelry boxes in his hand.

She looked him the eyes. They were soft for the first time in days, and she pulled up her loose curls
so he could fasten the collar around her. He kissed her neck as the cold metal touched her skin, then kissed each wrist as he put on the cuffs. He turned her around to look at them together in the mirror.

He was in black of course, dress uniform for the First Order, chest filled with ribbons and medals. Red hair combed to perfection, blue eyes aloof to the world, but always aware of her and her presence. Her raven curls fell down her back, covering all the burn marks that were just visible if you looked hard enough. The make-up artists had done her face to complement her performance from the previous evening.

Kohl lined both eyes, and the amber glow seemed brighter for the neighboring darkness. Her lips were red, overlaid with amber and slick with repeated licks from her tongue, another sign of nervousness. The collar gleamed against the pale of her skin, the large amber pendant twinkling with the matching stones on her wrist. The only other jewelry she wore was her wedding set.

"You are lovelier than ever tonight. I think pregnancy is beginning to agree with you. Has the morning sickness ended?"

She bit her tongue to tell him if he'd been around more the last few weeks he'd know how she felt, but what purpose would it serve? He knew he'd been wrong to abandon her on their honeymoon, he was trying to atone. She needed to stop throwing his love back in his face.

"It comes and goes. I hope that assistant of mine remembered to send over the list of foods I cannot be around. Otherwise this might be a short evening."

Hux pulled on his gloves, then swirled Lyric's cloak around her, fastening the amber latch at her neck. He lay one hand against her cheek, and she leaned in for comfort. "My beautiful wife."

She smiled, "My dashing husband."

They held hands at they entered the speeder, eyes only on each other.
Chapter Summary

Being part of the First Order means boring dinners, and chances for awkward conversations.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion
'Wonderful Tonight'
Eric Clapton

Chapter Nineteen - Official Functions

Hux sat at the table drumming his fingers in an effort to prevent from ordering their security detail to run amok during the salad courses. Between the politicians fawning over his wife while making lewd remarks, and scions of old Imperial families making snide comments about her former political friends, it was all he could do not to slaughter everyone and just go home. For a moment he found himself missing Snoke. Perhaps blowing a few systems into rubble would improve the level of respect.

To top everything else, the ambassador from Naboo had brought Poe fucking Dameron as her escort for the evening, covering him with her immunity. So far, he'd successfully avoided the loathsome pilot across the room, but his presence was a thorn in Hux's side. He'd already told his men to shield his wife at all costs, but with more than two hundred people in the mansion, it was going to take everything he had not to cause a scene.

Lyric noticed his discomfort but was carefully ignoring it. She was seated across the table from him, luckily, so her back was to the table where her cousin was seated, but it was only a matter of time. She could read the distress in him as well as himself. When the plates were cleared, before the next course could be served, he motioned for her to join him in the hall. He excused them from the table and made for a back, service corridor near the kitchens.

"Yes Armi?"

It was just the two of them, his security team making sure no one came near. He moved close to lower this voice. When he inhaled, he could smell the lavender and sandalwood that she favored.

"I'm going to tell you something, then I want you to pretend you know nothing, can you do that for me?"

Her face was still, more questions in those amber orbs then he wanted to address at this moment. "Of course. I'll do whatever you ask."
He kissed her forehead, not wanting to smear her lipstick on his face. "I don't know why and I don't know how, but your cousin is here tonight as the guest of the ambassador from Naboo."

"I didn't know either, and I certainly didn't invite him."

"I know love, but we have to assume if he is here, the Resistance is going to try a rescue. That cannot happen, Lyric. Do you understand?"

"I have no wish to be rescued, Armi."

"Good. Then you will stay be my side the rest of the evening. If we have to beg off early, then we do. Nothing that could separate us will be allowed to happen. Agreed?"

"Agreed."

When they returned to the dinner, Lyric kept her eyes on Hux, not even attempting to locate her cousin. He told their table she wasn't feeling well and seated her on his lap for the remainder of dinner, feeding her when she expressed interest in something, otherwise they talked between themselves in a low tone. While unconventional to seat his wife on his knee, Hux made it pointedly clear the arrangement was not up to discussion. Polite to those around them, he kept one hand on her back, body poised to leap at the first sign of trouble. He noted the Death troopers stationing themselves in key locations around the room.

Damn the ambassador for bringing him. Anyone else from the Resistance, hell he'd even be happy to see Leia Organa over Poe Dameron. Why the fuck did Ren and his woman take now to go off to build the scavenger a damn light saber? Then they would be here for this endless dinner and he would be on his way home to dinner with his wife. Alone. Just them.

At least Lyric was being cooperative, for which he was immensely grateful. Giving her pregnancy as reason for abandoning her seat, planting herself in his lap, and ignoring most of the unfamiliar food, she was quiet, listening politely to the conversation around them, one hand on his thigh, the other across his shoulders. The commander of the base and his wife were both members of the ballet guild, and were discussing the changes to this season's program. It was only when he felt Lyric go unnaturally still he tuned in to listen. Then he grew cold with anger.

The man was chattering. "Of course, Madam Izzerah is a treasure, an absolute treasure. She took over and truly reformed that company. But then, you were there during Piccus' tenure as well? Did you know any of the dancers involved?"

Hux had to strain to hear her choked out reply. "Yes, very well."

He felt the strain in her back, the trembling that always started before she ran away. Like a wild animal unsure which direction held safety, her eyes were searching for exits. While his love could handle many things, returning to that time was not one of them. She stood rapidly, but he refused to let her go alone.

"Pardon us gentlemen, when a woman needs to go."

Everyone smiled politely as the men rose and bowed. He pulled her along in his wake, looking for a place for some privacy. Luckily one of his men knew what was required and shortly they were in a small lounge, far apart from the dinner crowd. Hux informed his men they were not to be disturbed for any reason. Once inside, he locked the door and let loose her hand.

"Oh gods, will that nightmare never end?" The wail in her voice struck him to the core.
She sank onto the couch, shaking like a leaf, unable to cry for the rage and nausea that always came with thoughts of that time in her life. Hux put his arms around her, soothing her hair while rocking her slowly back and forth. While she tried to merely breathe, he debated different ways of killing that damn commander. So far, sending him out an air lock with no suit was winning, right behind having Ren Force slam the bastard into the deck a few times.

Piccus had been a twisted genius, whose psychological torture of the young dancers of the company escalated as the man aged, until eleven months after Lyric joined. Then her roommate, a gifted dancer named Priss committed suicide after the ballet master's cruel voice sent her into a crippling depression and the child jumped to her death. Lyric was devastated.

Even though it was almost a year later when Hux met her, Lyric was emotionally bent from her time under the twisted fingers of the monster, and some nights he knew she still wrestled with demons he understood all too well. Snoke haunted his nights, threatening to drown him in the voice of the past. Only her soothing presence in his bed allowed him any rest.

"Do you want to go home?" His voice was low. "I can call the speeder right now, just say the word."

She shook her head.

"No, if we leave that bastard wins again. Besides, we still have to mingle and greet. Just, just keep that commander away from me."

"As always, love. Now, let me look at you."

She held her face up for his inspection.

"Perfection as always. Now, take my arm, and this will be over before you know it."

Her smile was fake, but the attempt sincere. They made their way back to the after-dinner mingle, staying together instead of splitting up into the traditional male/female groups that dotted the room. She listened dutifully as he joined in conversations on new ship design and armament testing. He smiled as women offered her pregnancy advice and delivery room horror stories. Both were beginning to gravitate toward the exit when their path was suddenly blocked by the ambassador from Naboo and Poe Dameron.

"You have some gall bringing him here," Hux hissed at the ambassador.

The woman shrugged. "He wanted to talk to his family. Can you hate him so much that you will deny them family? Especially now?" She glanced pointedly at Lyric's baby bump.

Lyric laid her hand gently on his arm. "It's all right. There's nothing he can say that will upset me, not tonight."

She turned as face Dameron. "Hello Buddy."

"Hi Bunny." The pilot ran his hand through his hair. "Is there somewhere we can talk?"

"Right here is fine." Lyric made it known she would not leave Hux's side. "Anything you have to say to me, you can say right here."

Dameron sighed. "Okay Bunny, if you're going to be that way."

"What way?" She interrupted, frost touching her words. "I told you. Armitage and I are together,
we're starting a family. I will not go back to the Resistance. I will not submit my child to a life without a father and with a miserable, crazy mother. I love you Poe, you are my family. But Armitage is as well. Until both sides of my family can meet without wanting to blow each other out of the sky, you know where I'll be."

"Lyric, it isn't safe. We've had word, someone is asking about you. Someone who shouldn't be alive. You're in danger, and if Captain Hugs over there loves you like he acts he does, then he needs to get you off this planet as soon as possible." 

She rolled her eyes and huffed, "What are you talking about?"

"Lyric," Poe grabbed her hands, pulling her toward himself, "listen to me. Ciara was crazy yes, but not when it came to your father. He was and is, a dangerous man. We've had reliable intelligence from sources on Serenno. That he's alive and looking for you again. You need to hide."

"Hide? Do you even hear yourself Dameron?" Hux sneered at the shorter man. "She's a public figure, surrounded by Death troopers and the finest military in the galaxy, on a planet in the heart of the crowded Core. No one, no matter who they are, is going to take her away. That includes your Resistance."

She laid a hand on Hux's sleeve. "Armitage, please. Poe, thank you for your concern and for sharing this with us. Now that we have this information, there will be a new security plan to take this into the mix. However, I'm very tired and we were just about to leave."

Hux had to hand it to the scum, the look on his face would have broken most women's hearts. Dameron did have a way about him. Lyric however, as family, was immune to his charm "You look beautiful Bunny. How are you feeling?"

"Better. I still have bad days, but they're letting less and less. Baby is growing, and should be here in about five months."

"Do you know if it's a boy or girl?"

She shook her head. "I don't want to know. I want the surprise."

"Lyric, are you happy?"

Reaching for him, she took his arm and pulled Hux tight. "Yes Buddy, I really am happy. Now, we have to go. If you ever want to see the ballet, call the box office and ask if there are any tickets for Shara Bey. They're always waiting for you."

Hux felt the indecision in the other man, and decided to take matters in hand. "It was strange to see you again, Dameron, especially with you not in handcuffs. Hopefully it will be much longer before this happens again."

As they brushed past the pilot, he grabbed Hux's arm.

"Will you find a way to let me know when she goes into labor, or at least that everything is fine when the baby comes? She's, damn it Hux, she's all I've had in the world since she was a baby. I just need to know she comes through okay."

Wordlessly, he examined the man's face. He knew how it felt, to worry about this woman and not know from one day to another if she still lived. It brought him to the edge of madness, he could only imagine how Dameron managed. At last he nodded in agreement.
"I'll send out a flare on this frequency," he handed Dameron a card with a number jotted down. "And before you think this is something you can use against the First Order, it's not. It's a private frequency Lyric and I have used for years in case of emergencies."

"Hux, keep an ear out for her father too. I never met the man, but I saw his handiwork on Ciara's face more than once."

"Do you know who he is, anything we can use to track him down?"

Dameron sighed heavily. "All Ciara would tell me, the last time I saw her, was he was affiliated with House Dooku. But that made no sense. Bron Dooku was killed by speeder crash two decades ago. Could be an apprentice, or simply a devotee, but whatever he is he's dangerous."

Their coats were ready and the speeder at the curb, so Hux collected his wife, who hugged her cousin one last time before they exited for home. The evening had been such a nightmare he hadn't even thought about making good on his threat. Not her fault of course, everything about this posting was souring his mood. She was the only ray of light in his days. Otherwise his days were filled with mindless drivel and infantile minions.

Now that Lyric had passed the initial three-month crisis period, he would have her cleared for space travel. He'd take her to rejoin the fleet for a few weeks. It would feel good to have the deck of a destroyer under his feet again. They would have to return before the eighth month, but at least the caged in feeling would lessen.

Hux pulled her onto his lap, feeling her shiver, wondering if was nerves or the weather. Seeing her cousin had to have been upsetting but she was keeping everything bottled up inside. That was the way she was, and it bothered him. While he burdened her every day with the things driving him mad, she kept all her frustrations and angers inside until she blew up over something that might actually mean nothing. He snuck a look at her profile, amazed as always at how incredibly beautiful she was, even half asleep.

"What are you so quiet about, love?" He took her hand and brought it to his lips as she dropped her head to his shoulder.

"Tired of being involved in shit that isn't of my making."

"I agree. What say we just forget about anything Dameron said about your father and just pretend you had a nice visit with an estranged relative?"

Laughing, she threw her head back, exposing that long gorgeous neck to his lips. As he bent in to nibble she moaned softly for only his ears. A moment later they were home. They walked in slowly, enjoying the temporary relief from the rain. Once inside, each undressed in their own dressing closets, only meeting again on their way to bed.

He knew after seeing Dameron she needed to be held, needed to know she wasn't alone, that he was her family now too. She wore a thin cotton nightgown, which showed the dark blush of her nipples, and the darker mound of her sex. She lay down on her back, staring at the ceiling, arms cross her chest which he'd come to learn meant she was thinking hard.

He lay beside her, running his hands over the small bump of her abdomen. She sighed heavily and took his hand in her own, pulling it to her breasts. He fingered the nipples through the cotton, the soft material providing a sensory pain for her newly expanding breasts.

"I will not let anyone or anything hurt you Lyric, you know that."
She hummed her agreement. Then she wrapped her arms around him, pushing him onto his back. Without a word, she pushed his sleeping pants and underwear down to his ankles, taking his cock in her hands until it was hard and weeping. Her hands pulled the gown up and over her head, then she took him in hand and guided him into her moist center.

He lay back and let her set the speed and tone of their love making. Lyric was never the aggressor, and he'd do nothing to make this a bad experience given her mood. She rolled her hips, making sure he hit that magic spot inside each time she rose and fell back onto him. Her hands braced on his chest so she could vary the speed to chase the release they both needed. When she growled in frustration, too many problems in her head blocking her search for pleasure, he slid one hand between them, circling her clit then pressing hard.

She reached her pinnacle and cried out his name as she felt him roll them both over, cried out again and again as he slid into her cunt until he burst inside her, stars blinding him to everything in the universe except the warm, fluttering, tightness in which he was tightly sheathed.

Hux rolled to the side, breathing heavily, still locked inside her. He searched her face to see where her emotions were fluttering, brushing a strand of hair out of her eyes and behind her ear. She smiled at him, her eyes soft with love and emotions she couldn't find mere words to describe. Sliding closer, she fit underneath his chin, arms tight around each other and in complete peace with the universe.

It had been a crazy few months, transitioning from space to planet, and he knew part of his irritability was the claustrophobia, so he was willing to be more adaptable than under most circumstances. In space, Hux normally slept little, living on caf and his own internal drive. Sleeping every night in their bed was becoming the norm, and he didn't want her to have problems sleeping alone when he began traveling more. But he was also becoming used to her touch in the middle of the night, to her willing cunt when he needed to reassure himself of her presence when the nightmares drove him awake.

How did he ever manage before her?
Chapter Summary

Lyric's pregnancy continues to progress and Armitage is called back to space.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion
'Along Together'
Fall Out Boy

Chapter Twenty - Marking Time

For the sixth month checkup, the doctor did another sonogram, giving them a new holo of their child moving round inside Lyric's belly. They sat and watched it over and over, eyes wide in wonder of the new life inside her. A combination of him and her, but they still refused to learn the sex. Ren knew as did Rey, but Lyric had told her child that she wanted to be surprised when they met. All she'd told Hux was the baby was Force sensitive. When he'd recoiled in horror, she was quick to reassure him, not as talented as Ren.

Hux remembered the first night she'd held his hand to her belly and he'd felt his child pressing their small hand to the sky, searching for a connection to mommy and daddy. While he loved his nieces and nephew, this was his own blood, and Armitage Hux was in serious danger of cheating on his wife with love for their child.

Other officers told him it was okay, that every man goes a little crazy when their wife carries their first child. One man told of having food cravings same as his wife, and they'd both gained almost sixty pounds before the child even arrived. Another swore he went through labor pains along with his wife, and the doctors had to put him on a stretcher when he passed out.

Her last performance was shortly before the seventh month appointment. Though tall, her belly was taking on a round baby look, and every time he looked at her she fucking glowed with inner peace and love. Her farewell for the season was mild in comparison to her debut, not just because of the baby but also her ankle needed more rest. There was a distinct click in the joint when she walked. Afterward they sat for hundreds of photos until she'd laid her hand on his arm and he'd cut everything off.

Now they sat in the doctor's office, seven months along and the man had a worried look on his face as he read the blood test results. "You aren't getting enough rest."

"I just stopped performing. I promise to spend the next month resting."

"Until your blood count improves, I'm ordering you to bed, Lady Hux. From now until I'm satisfied
you aren't going to keel over. You also need more iron and vitamin D. I'm having a formulary made, and will send it to your apartments later today."

"But.."

"Lady Hux, if you do not keep yourself well, then I will admit you to the women's ward and here you will stay until you deliver, do I make myself clear?"

He stepped between his angry wife and the doctor. "Lyric will take care of herself, we promise. Are there any other instructions?

"I want to start seeing her every two weeks now, as we get closer to the delivery date. No traveling off world, no hot saunas, nothing that raises her heart rate."

"Nothing?" Hus raised one eyebrow.

"If she feels up to sex, then by all means. It released endorphins that are good for her and the baby. Just nothing strange, no odd positions, that sort of thing."

He glanced at Lyric's face, it was purple with embarrassment and he had to laugh. She rolled her eyes as the doctor completed her pelvic exam.

"Cervix is still closed, nothing out of the ordinary there. If you'll just stay in bed and watch that blood pressure, then we should be back on track."

"Yes doctor," the anger in her voice hard to disguise.

The man left, and the anger she'd been holding in spewed over. "How dare he assume I trying to do the wrong thing.

Hux moved to stand between her outspread legs, still caught in the stirrups of the medical table. "Now this is a view I'm coming to regret letting anyone have of you."

"I wonder if they sell these chairs to the public?"

"Armi! Someone could walk in at any moment."

"Thanks for reminding me." He grinned that evil smirk that always sent shivers throughout her body. With a flick of his hand, he locked the door. Then he removed his belt and opened up his pants, freeing his already hardening cock as she smiled at him.

"Slide your ass closer to the edge," he urged her.

He slid into her, still feeling the lube the doctor had used to ease gloved fingers into Lyric during the exam. It'd had two effects on Hux. First, he wanted to throttle the doctor for feeling inside what belonged to him alone, second – he needed to fuck his wife. Now. Seeing her in this position brought out something feral and possessive. He needed to feel her around him, to claim her now that another dared to finger what was his.

Looking down, the exam gown thrown up and over her breasts, he stared in amazement at the sight of his cock moving in and out of her, twirling his finger around her clit, then spreading the moisture to her nipples. They instantly peaked under his attention and Lyric began to moan and buck on the table.

He braced his legs a little wider, letting his hands lay on each side of her body, bringing him low and close to her. He could feel her cunt beginning to ripple around him, her breath hard and fast. It
wouldn't be much longer, already his balls pulled up closer to his body, ready to explode into her.

Suddenly Lyric's back arched hard off the exam table and her eyes opened wide, catching his as she came quietly with the force of a starfighter exploding to light speed. His body released in answer to the warm vice around his cock, draining him into her.

He was careful not to lay on her belly while attempting to slow his breathing. She ran her fingers through his hair, bringing his face to hers for a long, deep kiss. Her eyes were warm and soft, and one again he marveled at the universe putting this woman in his life. As he shrank and pulled himself from her, a gush of semen and liquid ran out of her, pooling on the table below her ass. There were washcloths in the bathroom, and he used warm water to wash her clean, then to clean himself.

She dressed while he tucked himself back into his uniform and checked his appearance in the mirror. Fastening his cloak he turned and studied his wife.

Today she was wearing a dark amber wool dress with a moderate neckline, high waisted and cut wide for her expanding waistline. The black cloak was lined with a matching amber silk, and her black gloves matched his own. He claimed her mouth for another passionate kiss, then opened the door and they both swept into the hall then out of the building.

For once it wasn't raining, and Galactic City hummed with the bustle of a sunny day. When they entered their speeder, he punched in an address then pulled her into his arms.

"I have some place I want us to go."

She nodded wordlessly. He could tell she was very tired but refusing to let a doctor dictate her actions. Ever since the crash, her blood pressure remained a precarious thing. Of course, that tended to happen when you lost almost all the blood in your body. She still had days when he knew it was all she could do to drag herself upright, but she never let her physical state rule her activity. He admired the hell out of her for a lot of reasons, that being just one of them.

The store carried baby furniture. She looked around, eyes wide, as he told her to pick out what she wanted for the baby's new room. It took a while for her to carefully examine each set, picture them inside their quarters, picture herself changing diapers and nursing their child. When she settled on one at last, he had to smirk, as it was the set he'd decided on ten minutes after they'd walked in the store.

They worked together on choosing bedding that was bright and cheerful and gender neutral, the same with clothing. When it came time to leave, the entire staff was waiting for them.

"There's no charge today, Field Marshall, Lady Hux. The store is more than thrilled you chose us to outfit the new addition to your family."

"This is way too much," Lyric murmured. "We couldn't possibly accept...

"No," the store owner insisted. "I've followed your career since you first arrived here as a teenager and then the dreadfulness of your kidnapping. You've endured so much, and come through it smiling, it seems the least we can do to help you celebrate your happy ending."

In the end, Lyric agreed to let them use their name in their advertising in exchange for the items. Hux would have just taken the goods without a thought, but he'd noticed Lyric preferred the barter system of mutual satisfaction, and people loved her for it. As they returned to their speeder, after posing with the staff for pictures and autographs, he took her hand. When she turned to look at him,
he tried to channel all he felt into his words, knowing they would fall short.

"When I saw you on Yavin, after the raid, my greatest fear was you would die before I could make things right. I know we're still trying to make things right, but between us I feel a peace coming into focus. I love you, Lyric. My world is you, me, and this child. I would burn everything and everyone who tries to hurt either of you."

She smiled, laying her hand on his cheek. "And I would do the same for you, Armi."

The speeder moved on toward home, and she lay her head on his shoulder. He played with her fingers, allowing himself this moment to just let life happen.

When they arrived home, a courier waited with an important message from Punisher. He needed to go off world for a few days, a week at the most. As she watched him pack, he had the most irrational feeling he would never see her again. He pulled her into a crushing bear hug.

"Do not leave the building without letting Phasma know where you are. She's coming to run the household security while I'm off world. Any sign of problems, you call her and the doctor. She'll know how to reach me while you are being taken care of."

"I don't want you to go."

He shook his head. "I don't want to either, but it shouldn't take long to clear up. I'll be back before you can miss me. Would you like to see if Bella can stay with you? She'd loved to take you shopping again."

Lyric smiled, but he could tell it didn't reach to her eyes. She was afraid, afraid something would happen to them while apart. Since she'd emerged from the bacta tank, they'd not been separated more than a few nights. He pulled out his comms device and dialed in his sister's frequency. She answered quickly.

"Armitage, to what do I owe this pleasure?"

"I need you sister dearest. I'm being called off world, and I need someone to stay with Lyric while I'm gone. She's feeling very pregnant."

"I'll be there in a few hours. Nothing a shopping and spa trip can't heal."

He clicked the device closed and smiled. "There, all better. No one can be unhappy with Bella orchestrating events. I only ask you refrain from dancing in the rain. The guards aren't sure if they're supposed to report you when it happens, or just watch."

"And what did you tell them?" Her smile was coy, and he nibbled on the corners of her mouth before continuing.

"I told them if you aren't in any distress, just watch and enjoy the show. If you're upset or in pain, or seem to be running away from them, then they are to call me and detain you, keep you safe."

"You do love me, don't you Armi?"

"You have no idea how much I love you, Lyric. It's like my soul was in fragments until you came back into my life. All the hate and dysfunction that Snoke indoctrinated into Ren and me is finally clearing away, and you've replaced it with love, and self-respect, and I'm a better man with you beside me."
Tears filled those amber orbs he loved so much, and the smile on her lips trembled at the depth of her emotions. He smoothed her hair as she leaned into his chest, her ear against his heart. When the knock on the door alerted him to the arrival of his driver, he kissed her long and hard.

"I'll video you tonight, once I'm settled in. Don't let Bella talk you into anything crazy."

"I promise. I love Armi."

"I love you too, my darling."

As he walked through the door, he heard the sobs begin behind him, but he forced his feet to carry him down the staircase and out the door. Sitting in the passenger seat, it took every bit of his lifetime of obedience to service not to smash his fist through something. By the time he arrived at the spaceport to catch his shuttle, Armitage Hux Field Marshall and master of the galaxy had returned, and the anger he felt at being forced to leave the side of his pregnant wife simmered like a cancer beneath his skin, waiting for the chance to spring free.

Whatever the reason he'd been called into space had better be damn good, or heads would roll, with Ren's light saber or without.
Love and Lies

Chapter Summary

Learning to be alone

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion
'Lonely Tonight'
Blake Shelton

Chapter Twenty-One – Love and Lies

Bella Hux was nothing like her brother, in a positive manner. She'd been allowed a modicum of freedom which allowed her personality to bloom rather than wilt like Armitage. She swept into Lyric's sitting room with the force of a small thunderstorm on a summer day.

"Come, I've made us appointments at the spa. You need a pedicure while you can still see your own feet. Then we're going to eat something outrageous and fattening. If there's time, we'll pick up a few things for your recuperation. No tears today, nothing but attention on you."

"Thank you, Bella, I appreciate you coming while Armi is gone, but..."

"No buts. I know I'm a poor substitute for my brother. However, look at it this way, you are my sister by law, and we sisters are going to have a girl's day out."

It did feel nice, having her feet tended to and her face scrubbed and moisturized. She missed the freedom to just make her own appointments, wander around Galactic City learning the flavor of the many neighborhoods, enjoying the ethnic foods and vibrations. Now Hux restricted her to certain areas of the city only, and none without her escorts. Even now they stood beside the entrance, two black armored statues announcing her and Bella's presence louder than any microphone.

Dinner was a decadent mixture of dishes from several different cuisines, finished off with fresh fruit, finger cakes, and hot tea. She and Bella talked and gossiped about who was cheating with who, and the other idle gossip the elites spent their time sharing. By the time her guard insisted they head back to the palace, Lyric was tired and ready for a hot shower.

Bella even slept in the bed with Lyric, having been brief by Armitage on her nightmares and fears of being alone. While she wasn't Armitage, she was another person, and most nights that was enough to keep the demons at bay, but tonight wasn't one of those nights.

She rose quietly, and slipped out of the bedroom. It was quiet in the night, though she knew Armitage had guards stationed everywhere while he was off world. She padded out to the balcony,
not to slip away but to simply enjoy some solitude. There was too much unrest in her soul, and she wasn't sure what caused her worries.

There was the upcoming birth, which she thought about constantly but only in terms of the unknown. Her overly thoughtful husband had provided many holos on both pregnancy and childbirth, but she'd only watched one of them before running away in terror. She'd then decided to approach the entire situation the way she did most problems, when they happened not before.

Madam Izzerah was throwing a baby party for Lyric at the ballet in two weeks, and she was supposed to be nice to all these fake women who supported the company and the wives of First Order bureaucrats and galaxy ambassadors. It was times like this she longed for the simplicity of an X-wing and flying wherever her heart desired. If she were to sneak over to the base and steal a TIE fighter, how difficult could it be? Poe had done it.

She walked over to the tree and looked down. There were two troopers stationed there, looking up at her. The taller one shook his head at her.

"Not while the Field Marshall is gone, Lady Hux. We all took a vote and decided you can stay in your room for a few nights while he's away. Safer for you and for us."

"I won't tell if you won't?"

They both laughed at her. "My lady, you're heavily pregnant. Can't you give up climbing trees and running through the wet grass for a few nights? To make him happy?"

She smiled and laughed at them. "Well, to make him happy, no. But to keep you from being in any trouble on my account, then yes. I'll stay in. Please let everyone know I will behave until my husband returns."

"Thank you, my lady. Will you be returning to bed?"

"No, I think I'll make my way to the library. No tree climbing tonight, promise."

"Good night Lady Hux."

She slipped back inside, making sure Bella was still asleep. She pulled on a pair of warm leggings, threw a shawl around her shoulders and made her way to the library, which also served as the comms center. Armi should be calling soon, and she didn't want to waste a moment. Relay messages from the far reaches of the galaxy were timed to dish alignment, and if she missed the window, it could be days before they connected again.

If she could make it one week alone, it would be the first one since she emerged from the nightmare of the bacta tank and intensive care. She'd told Armi she could take care of herself and most of the time, she felt capable of that statement. Physically she was healing, except for the blood pressure which the doctors assured her would even out once the baby came.

Emotionally she could be all over the place. She'd been calm for the most part, only earning correction for extreme violations. She'd been horny since the moment she'd gotten pregnant, and her increasing size made her feel like giant nerf. Sometimes she sobbed for no reasons and then she would snap and want to bash the walls with her fists.

The door opened behind her, and Hux's favorite officer walked in, her chrome armor replaced with a standard First Order officer's garb. Phasma still walked with a limp, and the burn mark on her face and neck reminded Lyric they had something in common.
"Pardon my lady, but has the Field Marshall called yet?"

Lyric smiled and motioned for the woman to join her. "Not yet Captain, but I couldn't sleep. Do you mind if I wait in here?"

"Not at all my lady. Shall I ring for some tea or perhaps something to eat?"

"No thank you, Captain. Carry on as if I wasn't here. How are you feeling?"

"The pain comes and goes, my lady. Much as your own burns I'm sure."

She snuggled under her blanket, running her hands through her hair. Tonight, the baby was doing tumbling exercises, and her sides were feeling bruised from the punishment. Phasma took off the cover on the printer, pulling several non-critical messages off and processing them as needed.

When the holo pinged, Lyric sat up straight, motioning for the Captain to answer while she dragged her pregnant body across the room. Armi's voice filled her ears.

"Phasma, how's my wife?"

"Making her way across the room now, sir."

"Why isn't she in bed? Where's my damn sister?"

Phasma bristled under the rebuke. "My men stopped Lady Hux from climbing down the tree again approximately three hours ago. Since then, she's been here in the library waiting quite calmly for your call. I believe Lady Bella is upstairs sleeping as we speak."

"Lyric, where are you?"

She limped around to sit in front of the transmitter. "Here Armitage. How are you?"

"Exhausted but better now that I see you. Why are you up, and trying to climb down the tree? The doctor ordered you to bed."

"I couldn't sleep. And don't be angry at Bella. She's been wonderful. It's just getting harder and harder to sleep as I get bigger."

"You need to rest."

"I need my husband, but he's not going to be here anytime soon either."

"I should be back in few days. You'll barely notice I'm gone. Now, I need to talk with Phasma. Go to bed, and I'll speak with you again tomorrow."

"All right. Armi, be careful. I have the worst feeling."

"I'll be fine. Go to sleep. I love you."

"I love you too."

She left the library, still not tired. She decided to go check on the progress in the baby's new room. The furniture had been delivered, but still sat un-assembled in boxes. Pulling out the directions, she began putting the crib together. It took several hours, as she didn't hurry anything, working at a steady speed to keep from wearing herself down. Once the crib was done, she completed the changing table and dresser.
The light was beginning to filter into the room when she finished. Looking around, she smiled in satisfaction at her night's work. She curled up on her side, looking around, imagining their life ahead in this room, with these furnishing. She closed her eyes for a moment, intending to head to bed once she caught her breath.

Her dreams were filled with red and black haired children with striking blue eyes.

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It was mid-morning when they buzzed Captain Phasma, waking her after her night on duty.

"This had better be fucking important," she hissed into the comms.

"Captain, we cannot locate Lady Hux."

"What?"

"She never returned to bed this morning. We've searched the palace and grounds, no one has seen her nor can they find her."

Phasma sat up, rubbing her face with her hands. "Has anyone look at security videos?"

"Yes Captain. She left the library, went to the east wing, then disappeared."

"Meet me in the east wing in ten minutes."

Throwing her uniform on, she remembered the conversation she'd had with the Field Marshall after his wife had left the room. There were fanatics out there, Resistance scum kicking up trouble in the Outer Rim, who were determined to see Lyric separated from her husband. Several fringe groups claimed that Lady Hux was a member of House Dooku, and therefore in need of rescue to claim her rightful place as Countess of Serenno. The Supreme Leader was on his way to protect Lady Hux, but under no circumstances was anyone allowed in or out of the property.

Now she was missing, and she could feel the cold hands of Lord Ren wrapping around her throat if anything had happened.

They searched the east wing from attic to basement. They discovered the baby's room furniture, assembled apparently by Lady Hux. Then they discovered the paper, carrying the crest of Count Dooku, a Sith beheaded more than half a century prior. Something was very wrong.

Phasma punched the wall next to her head. It was time to call Lord Ren and let him know what had happened. She's then let Lord Ren handle Hux. She'd probably still be able to hear his wrath.
The Galaxy is Too Small

Chapter Summary

Lyric finally meets her crazy father, while Ren and Rey help Lyric to escape.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion
'Waiting for Love'
Avicii

Chapter Twenty-two - The Galaxy is Too Small

Lyric's head was pounding, and she couldn't make her eyes focus. When she tried to stand up, she discovered she was chained to the bed in a room she'd never been in before. The walls were stone, and a fire burned in the fireplace. The windows were closed, the curtains drawn tight. There were candles everywhere, giving the room a soft yellow tone.

"Where am I?" She wondered aloud as she examined the chains on her arms. One chain ran from the headboard to her left wrist, then joined to the cuff on her right.

"You're home Lady Dooku. At last."

She looked around for the voice. A man was seated in the dark corner, blending into the darkness.

"Who are you?"

"Genetically, I am one of your fathers. An easier explanation is that my name is Jeof Dooku, a genetic grandson of Darth Tyranus and ruler of the planet Serenno."

Her mind seemed to be caught in oatmeal. "The last heir to House Dooku died in a crash, many years ago. I've never heard of you. My name is Bey."

"Yes and no. There was a crash, and Bron was seriously injured. But I came from a lab, not a woman, thanks to some of the same cloning techniques our grandfather discovered. Once the family line was gone, my makers woke me and here I am. Most think I'm a distant cousin, ruling as the last blood member of the family. You will change all that. You will bring our family name back to prominence, wipe away the stain Tyranus painted on our family."

"I am not a Dooku. My name is Bey. Lyric Bey-Hux. I have no idea what the hell you are talking about, and I really just want to go home."

The man stood and walked to her. She shrank from his visible anger.
"You are home. This is your home. And once that Imperial scum's child is free of your womb, we will restore our house and our name."

"What?" The blood in her veins ran colder than ice water when she realized what he meant.

"In a few weeks, we can deliver that brat inside safely without damaging you. If Armitage Hux is as smart as I think he is, he'll take his spawn and run. Otherwise, I'll space the thing then we'll work on completing my grandfather's cloning procedures, using ourselves as the template."

"I will never work with you."

"With the Force I could make you suck your brat out with a vacuum hose and never think twice. Don't push me, or you'll find out I can just as ruthless as our grandfather."

"Wait, how can we generate clones with similar genome patterns?"

Jeof smiled evilly. "Grandfather thought of everything."

After he left, Lyric pulled herself into a ball on the bed. Wrapping her arms around her belly, she sobbed, allowing herself to feel sorry for her baby, Hux, and herself. She thought about how all she wanted was to feel Armitage's arms around her, telling her this was just a bad dream. She thought about Rey, and how she wished she had the skills of a Jedi to remove herself from this prison.

But maybe she did have a way of letting her predicament be known. She resettled her body in a meditation pose and began to concentrate on locating Kylo Ren. Finding his signature in the Force was easy. Capturing his attention something else. She'd never done this before, so decided the best way would be to act as if she were in the room.

Ren and Rey were on Coruscant. They were arguing with Armitage, who was still half-way around the galaxy on Punisher. He was frantic, and they were perplexed.

She reached out and touched Ren on the shoulder. He whirled around, finally able to focus in on her signature.

"Lyric?"

"Ren, help me. I'm in so much danger."

"Where are you? Who has you?"

She could see Armitage on the video screen, but couldn't hear his voice. She looked at Ren to translate.

"Hux is frantic," Kylo assured her. "Are you alright?"

"Right now, I'm fine. I'm on Serenno. This man calls himself Jeof Dooku, says he is my father but then claims I am some kind of clone. I'm so scared, Ren. He's going to force me to deliver early, so he can make me his test subject for some genetic experiment."

Ren's face darkened. "That will not happen, Lyric. We're coming for you." He turned to look at the video screens. "Hux wants me to tell you he's already got Punisher on burn. We should be there within two days, Hux about the same. Can you hold out that long?"

"I'm so scared, Ren"
anything he gives you. I wouldn't put anything past this animal."

"Hurry."

"We are."

Knowing they were coming, she allowed herself to pull together again. The only way she and her child would make it through this was if she played it smart. She was Lyric Bey damn it, not the clone of some dead asshole. She looked around her prison room. Not much in the way of tools. The fresher was not within the reach of her chain, which meant he'd have to free her to use the bathroom.

As she worked, she looked for something from which she could form a weapon. She needed to make sure no one laid a hand on her physical body until Hux or Kylo Ren could free her. There was a pole lamp in the corner, which would make a great bat toward someone head's. There was also a heavy granite paperweight on the desk. She stuck that under the mattress where she could easily grab it.

Soon, there was a knock on her door. It opened, apparently by a guard, and a robot brought a tray with dinner. Soup. Bread. Fruit. Water. Any of which could easily contain a poison to kill her and/or her child. With sadness she covered the tray again and returned to the bed to meditate. Months of deprivation living with Piccus had taught her to reject food for days at a time, never knowing what might be concealed. She'd been a child then, without the demands of another human being on her resources, but the principle was the same. An hour went by and the droid returned to pick up the untouched tray. She should have realized there would be consequences for her disobedience. It took several hours.

"Why are you not eating?" Dooku strummed his fingers on the arm of the chair upon which he rested. "If the food is unfamiliar, then tell me what you wish and it will be provided."

She was unmoved. "I wish to go home, to my husband."

"I am your lord now. You will do as I say."

"No."

He slapped her hard across her cheek. "You will do as I say or your brat will die before the night is done, do you understand?

"Why should I eat when all I know of you is that you want to harm me and my child?"

"You think I would poison the mother of Serenno's heirs?"

"I think you would do anything to get your way."

The smile on his face was pure disgust. "It is bad enough I could not get you away from that Imperial slime before he could force himself upon you. I will not stoop to the level of the First Order, but once that brat is delivered, you will conceive the new promised one. The brat will be sent to its father, and we will be free to rule Serenno as we were created to do."

"You're mad if you think this will work. There is nowhere in the galaxy you can hid from Armitage Hux and the First Order. He's not called the Hunter for no reason."

"So you informed the first crew I sent to rescue you from him. But he will let you go, once I give him his spawn. That's all he really wanted you for anyway, your beauty and your womb. He has
whores around the galaxy to service his more obscene perversions. He needed a proper wife to give him heirs, but he uses whores to give him satisfaction."

She leapt off the bed, nails set to scratch his eyes out. He caught her wrists, then slapped her across the face again. She landed on the floor, against the bed. He pushed a button and an electric shock slammed through her body.

"I would suggest you not try that again. Too many shocks and that brat in your belly will be here too soon to live."

As she broke into tears, he pulled her off the ground and up to her feet. His hands ripped open the front of her tunic, exposing her breasts to his eyes.

Then he threw her back down on the bed, and strode out of the room. Her tears fell in sheets, and she beseeched anyone in her head who might be listening to hurry before she and her child were lost. Ren told her to hang on, they would soon be in skies above Serenno but time was running short.

Lyric was feeling pain in her back and abdomen. Pain it was much too soon to feel.

Labor.
Chapter Summary

After discovering her husband's secret, Lyric decided to chuck it all and make her own way in the galaxy. Luckily she knows just the rogue to call for a ride.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion
'Love the Way You Lie'
Eminem

Chapter Twenty-three

Eighteen hours later, they blasted into the castle, Dooku gone, escaped in his private space liner, along with equipment from one of the cloning chambers below the dungeons. But Lyric was there, and it was obvious as soon as Hux looked at her that her condition was critical.

For the second time he watched her loaded onto a medical transport unsure if she would be alive when they reached the ship. As they slipped through the atmosphere, he called Ren to advise he had Lyric, and they could commence with retribution. Hux didn't care if Serenno burned into dust like Jakku. Someone on that rock knew something, and Ren and Rey would find it out, or someone would pay. He would know what the fuck was going on.

One hand held Lyric's as the medics attempted to stop the labor. The other was clenched into a fist, which pounded rhythmically against his thigh. Her eyes were closed, though the medic assured him she was doing better. There were two I.V.s running to her arm, one with fluids, the other with medicine to stop the contractions.

"Armitage," her voice was weak.

"I'm here, love." He put a hand against her cheek, indicating the medics should pause while she spoke to him. "Everything is going to be fine."

"The baby?"

He looked at the medic, one eyebrow cocked. The man rushed to answer them both. "I've got the baby's heartbeat on line, so far so good. Now we need to get you stabilized." The man flipped a switch and the strong rapid heartbeat filled the transport bay.

She sighed and leaned back, letting the medication send her to sleep. He stared at the medic.
"She can't hear us now?"

"No Field Marshall."

"Tell me the truth."

"She's seriously dehydrated, unfed for several days, her blood pressure is all over the place and her uterus is contracting in the earliest stages of labor. The medication should stop the contractions but she'll have to remain calm and laying down until it is safe to deliver. Any excess excitement could trigger contractions again." The man was nervous but efficient. Hux appreciated that.

Once they arrived on Punisher, Hux oversaw her transport to sick-bay. Phasma should arrive within the hour from Coruscant to take over Lyric's personal security, and Hux was in full protective mode. Upon reaching the bridge after leaving sick-bay, he barked out orders to depart as soon as Lord Ren returned, for Arkanis.

He needed her safe for two more months. He needed to know the security was impregnable. Home was the only place he could guarantee both of those things. She would be unhappy, but their safety was paramount. He returned to his quarters, threw his gloves and hat on the table then sat down heavily in his chair, staring for a moment out at the passing star field. Ren must have made it aboard.

Standing he walked to the window staring at the rapidly disappearing speck behind him. He pulled out his datapad, typing a memo to several senior First Order officials to investigate who this asshole calling himself Jeof Dooku might be. Then he ordered up a battle plan for taking Serenno. He wanted to know what their current weapons status was, who was supplying their capital, and in which directions the populace leaned. He wanted blood.

The First Order would take Serenno, or he would pound it into dust. That was his answer to this assault. They would give up this false count, or they could join Alderaan, and the Hosian system. Their choice.

His ice blue eyes shown with deadly calm.

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She slept for almost two days. The contractions ended, and color began to return to her cheeks. He stopped by as she ate lunch, and stayed to share her meal. The doctor rolled his eyes when he found the Field Marshall of the First Order snuggled onto the hospital bed with his patient. At that point he released Lyric to her husband's quarters under the strict instruction that if anything changed she would return at once.

Once in their quarters, he ordered another meal, then they showered together. The insecure part of Hux wanted to throw her down, inspect every inch of her body for damage and then fuck her until the panic in his soul eased. But with the contractions, the doctors told him to stop all sex until the next appointment at least.

So he washed her back, and her hair, then leaned back while she used her soapy fingers to coax his release. Once he'd come, it was easier to breathe and he could think rationally again. Afterward, he wrapped her in a warm towel and combed her hair as she vomited word by word everything she could remember. When she fell silent, he pulled a clean nightgown out of the drawer, helping her don it against the chill of the night.

He pulled on sleeping pants, then slid beside her under the soft blankets. She folded into the safety
of his arms, no questions about their destination, nor about what happened on the planet. As she drifted off to sleep in his arms, he thought about Darth Tyranus and the Clone Wars that had decimated the galaxy not so many years before.

Sliding one hand over his child, he remembered the helpless feeling he'd had when Ren told him she was gone. The floor had opened up beneath his feet and it had been all he could do to think rationally. Thank the gods Lyric managed to reach out through the Force to Ren. They would never have found her by trial and error.

He felt something pressing into his hand, and realized the baby was reaching out for him, trying to comfort him. In his mind, he had the impression of laughter, sunshine, and happiness. Hux was blindsided. Is this what Lyric experienced constantly, their child letting her know they were alright and safe?

"Yes." He heard Ren's voice in his head. "Your child wants you to know he's protecting his mother, too. He loves both of you very much."

"He? I'm having a son?"

The guilt in Ren's voice was loud. "I forgot you didn't want to know. I can remove this conversation if you like?"

"NO, no it's alright. I just have to remember to not say anything to Lyric."

"If you want to talk more with your child, just put your hands on her belly, like now. Concentrate on the baby, and you'll connect. He's very sensitive, and very brash. I think the two of you will clash heads often, and you'll be best friends."

Hux laughed. "That would be a first, wouldn't it Ren?"

"I believe anything is possible, Hux."

*****

The next morning when he awoke, Lyric was sitting in the living room, sipping a cup of tea and readying one of the articles he had found on childbirth. He glanced down to see she was reading about contractions and the stages of labor.

"Something wrong?" he asked, indicating the datapad.

"I realized it's time I knew what to be on the lookout for in the next few weeks. When I decided what was happening to me was labor, I suddenly felt very alone and very unprepared."

He kissed her hand, pulling it close enough to rest his head against her palm. "We're going to Arkanis and we're staying until the baby comes. I know I can control access to the planet and everyone will be on the lookout for danger to their Lady and the new baby."

"Alright Armi, whatever you think best."

"I know you don't want to stay in bed all the time, but will you promise to stay here in my quarters? I have to go to the bridge, and there's no way to take you."

"I'll be fine. Go do what you need."

He was confused with her passive attitude. He'd expected Lyric to be spitting venom and out for
blood. When he called the medic a little later, the man cleared up the problem.

"The sedative she's taking to stop the contractions makes her extremely passive. She's probably so passive you would get her permission for anything."

Unfortunately, by the time Hux returned to his quarters, the sedative had worn off, and she was on fire pissed. It didn't take long to find out what was wrong. Her memory had come back in full.

The first flying plate came as he removed his hat and gloves. He managed to duck but looked wildly for his attacker. There was only Lyric, hair a mess, eyes wide, anger written into over line of her body.

"Tell me about the whores you've been fucking?" She screamed at him, hate flowing from her eyes. "And don't try to lie. I'll know."

He ran at her and caught her hands, pulling her close, trying to capture her with his larger frame. The tears that wracked her frame tore him apart. He could hear her whispering, like a mantra.

"Tell me, you lying bastard."

"I've fucked no other woman since we rescued you on Yavin 4."

"But you have been with whores?"

The pause was all the answer she needed.

He tried to talk to her, tell her it wasn't anything, but she was too far gone. Her fists beat against him, along with kicks and shrieks. Her anger had no bound, and when she couldn't fight her way free conventionally, she threw him off with the Force, sending him crashing into a wall of shelves. He lost consciousness as she raced from them room, leaving him stunned and bleeding from several cuts on his head and back.

It was ten minutes before he was found.

*****

She was livid. More than livid, she wanted to make him suffer. Grabbing her cloak, she used the Force to mask her way through the halls to the closest hanger bay. She waited until the patrol passed, then crept into one of the readied TIE fighters, unclamped the mooring line and took off at maximum speed for Arkanis. Repeated attempts to raise her by the bridge and the medical team were ignored. Even Ren reached out but she slammed that door hard on his Force signature. Her anger knew no bounds.

Just as she approached jump speed, his voice came on the line.

"Lyric. I know you can hear me. Return to this ship at once. You are in no condition to be piloting a fighter. Return here, and let the doctors help you settle down."

With a deliberate hand she reached out and turned off the radio. Though she knew he'd find a way to turn it on again, she used the blessed silence to key in the comms code for Bella Hux. She was crying so hard, it took Bella a moment to figure out what she was crying about. Once she determined her brother was an ass, she'd given Lyric landing codes for a small landing strip well away from the city center.

Bella hugged Lyric, rubbing her hand up and down the younger woman's back as Lyric poured out
about the kidnapping, about what Jeof Dooku told her and what Hux all but vocally confirmed. Her husband preferred the company of paid companions.

They made for the family castle, and by the time Hux arrived, Lyric was safely ensconced in a panic room under medical supervision, with Bella acting as her spokesperson.

"Bells, what is this foolishness? Where is my wife?"

"Hiding. In one of the panic rooms."

"Whatever for?"

"Armitage, as your sister I've forgive you a lot, but this time the fault is all your own, and I do not know if this rip can be mended. Lyric is not as understanding as I."

"What are you talking about?"

She stared at him, her own blue eyes daring him to lie to her. "The whores."

"Oh gods, Bella. I've not fucked a whore in almost two years."

"But you have been with them, haven't you?"

Hux at least had the honor to look ashamed. "I can't stop. I am what father made me."

"Yes, and she offered to learn anything you wanted to teach her, and at the first bump in the road you backed off, leaving her with a planet sized case of insecurity, and the knowledge you've let common women touch you and be touched by you. You have shamed her, and someone like Lyric does not forgive a transgression of this magnitude."

"That's why I need to talk with her."

"You'd have better luck arguing with a supernova. She doesn't want to see you. She doesn't want to talk to you. She doesn't want you at the birth. She doesn't want you to come near her or the child. After the birth, an official separation will be negotiated. You will provide for her and the child, and upon the finalization of divorce proceedings, she and the child will be allowed to settle wherever they wish. You will be allowed no contact with the child so long as you maintain your, less desirable companions."

"Bella, she's cutting me off from my own child?"

His sister's eyes flared at him. "You're consorting with whores and then dared sharing her bed. If it were my husband, I'd have castrated you myself then left you to die. But for whatever reason, her love hasn't completely died yet. She doesn't want you totally destroyed, a notice I spent many hours trying to sway her toward."

"What do I do? I tried and discovered I didn't want her to submit to me. Not like others. Lyric was made to be worshipped. It's better when she fights me. It reminds me to be alive and then I know she wants to let go and feel the rest."

"You roared destruction across the galaxy for this woman, yet when it got a little too real, a little more personal once you realized there was love involved, you walked away. Gods men are such idiots. It's a miracle you survived this far without my assistance. Armitage, if you want her back, the first thing you're going to have to do it let her go."
"What?!"

"Brother dear, there are roughly six weeks until her due date, and right now the last person she wants to see is you. So, leave. Finish whatever it is you're doing out there on Punisher, then return to Coruscant. Keep your communicator close, so when she goes into labor you can get here. Once labor starts, she'll be looking hard for you. She'll forgive you."

"Bella, you have no idea how mad she is at me."

"Oh believe me, I know exactly how mad she is. I've heard in micro detail about what a bucket of scum you are. Now, I'm violating every confidence women hold between each other to tell you this, so listen. She's planning on running away and hiding from you until you have her declared legally dead and marry someone else. She asked you for three promises, and right now you've broken two of the three. Want to go for broke and make sure she never lets you see your child?"

"But I love her. I would never replace her."

"Let her run, I've already jacked her, to satisfy your need for control and my need to protect my unborn niece or nephew. But you need to give her some space. And for god sake, quit the whores. Married to the most desirable woman in the galaxy and you'd rather cavort with a pain whore, I don't understand it, and if I don't you can bet she doesn't. Either teach her what you want her to know or let her go. Which reminds, me, she wants you tested for diseases."

Hux threw his head down into his hands and groaned. Bella smiled, laughing as she reminded him.

"You're the one who can't keep it in his pants."

****

Meanwhile, Lyric was making contact with someone she knew she shouldn't but given the rage in her heart at the moment, she personally didn't give a shit. She'd given everything to that man, and he'd spit on her love and thrown it in the gutter. Well, nobody treated her like that and got away with it. Infidelity was a game two people could play, and she knew the perfect game piece.

The comm device clicked. "Kez Marab."

"Captain Marab, this is Lyric Bey."

There was a long silence, and she almost lost her nerve. Then he clicked in.

"What can I do for you pretty lady?"

"I need a ride somewhere. Interested?"

"It depends. How many destroyers will your jealous husband send after me to get you back?"

"Right now, Darth Vader couldn't drive me back to the First Order."

"So you're switching teams again?"

"No, I need a ride somewhere I can hide. I have the destination and everything else in place. I need a ride off of Arkanis, under the nose of Hux. I know how you love a challenge."

"And what will you give me for this favor?"

Lyric bit her lip, then plunged forward. "Whatever you want."
His laughter was loud and when he answered, her stomach flipped somersaults thinking about it.

"Oh pretty lady, I'm sure we can work some sort of trade arrangements."

"Let me know when you arrive Marab, and I'll meet you near my TIE fighter. It's parked in the woods behind a large lake."

"Will do beautiful. See you soon."

Her ride taken care of, she returned to the sitting room, now that Hux had left the castle to return to his ship. Bella hugged her tight and let her know her brother's reaction to everything. He was demanding she return to him, she was determined Hoth would become a desert of sand and heat before she returned willingly. Bella held her tight as she cried her heart out. Then, when it was time, she went back to her room.

She was crushed he was still frequenting whores, and could see no way she would forgive him for that. Unless he wanted to sit and watch while she fucked someone else, which was sounding better and better each minute. Of course, it was hard to go for revenge sex when you were about to pop with a baby.

Pulling out a duffle bag, she took only what she needed to survive. On the table she placed the amber collar and cuffs, along with her wedding set. It obviously didn't mean anything to Armitage, and she wouldn't wear it knowing he'd been with others. She took a bag of baby clothes and blankets, and a stuffed porg Rey had given her for the baby.

Looking around she decided she had everything she needed to make it at least until the baby was born. Maybe by then she would have found Rey, or others in the Resistance, and they could take her to Poe. Maybe they'd even let her fly again, that is, if they admitted could trust her.

The communicator pinged shortly after the mid-night bells. Grabbing the two bags, she made her way along the balconies to the end of the building. There was a drain pipe she shimmied down after throwing her bags ahead. Once on flat ground, it only took her moments to race for the cover of the trees. Within an hour she was at the TIE fighter, waiting for Kez Marab.

He came through the foliage like a vision out of a dream. She stood up, and he looked her up and down like a prize at a competition.

"Damn pretty lady, the more pregnant you get, the more beautiful you are."

"How far is your ship?"

"Not very. This all you have?"

"It doesn't take much to carry a broken heart."

"You want to talk about it?"

"Not yet."

He took her hands in his own, putting them around his waist so she had to come closer to him. His mouth claimed hers, softly at first, then with more command and their feelings, so long repressed, broke free of their chains and whipped the flames of their attraction.

"I'm glad you remembered me," Marab whispered in between kisses. "I thought I'd lost my chance."
"How could I forget you, Kez Marab?"

Ten minutes later they were slipping past Punisher and headed toward the Unknown Regions. Lyric ran her fingers nervously through her hair. She was free, broken and bruised, wiser and angrier than she'd ever been. Armitage Hux would rue the day he chose a whore over Lyric Bey.
Too Much for Time to Erase

Chapter Summary

Hurt and angry, Lyric takes the future into her own hands, and runs into Kez Marab full force.

Chapter Notes

Song Suggestion
'Lonely Girl'
Symon

Chapter Twenty-four

Hux was seated at his chair on the bridge. All around him the crew was at battle stations, following the hyperspace tracker that had been hidden on the 'Kestrel' when they'd met previously. So far, it appeared they were headed for the Unknown Regions, but he wouldn't take anything to chance. Not now. He couldn't remember when he'd been this angry.

The crew tried to keep their eyes on their screens, and not on the clenched jaw that refused to relax enough to eat, nor at the eyes that streamed cold and lowered the emotional temperature in the room to ice. Armitage Hux had passed angry, and was quickly approaching galactic destruction. Worse, because he knew, deep inside, he'd done this to himself.

He'd been unable to put Lyric in the role of submissive, and went back to finding that release through houses where that sort of behavior was fed. While he was technically correct he'd never touched them, he'd certainly let them suck him off. The knowledge made him sick, and each time it had happened, he sworn it was the last. How the hell that bastard calling himself Count Dooku found out enraged him.

Then she'd run away, with that shit bag Marab, and nothing was going to stop him from blowing that piece of Resistance smuggler trash into tiny pieces. Of all the people she could have called to come help her, that was not the one he thought she'd pick. Marab reminded him of Han Solo in all the least flattering ways. Why the hell she'd called him over Dameron he didn't understand, but he knew one thing.

She'd be back on this ship within twenty-four hours, or people were going to start dying.

*****

When Lyric opened her eyes, Marab was sitting on the edge of the bed, looking at her with concerned expression. He had a letter in his hands, which he handed to her without saying a word. It was from Leia Organa, of all people. She opened it and began reading.
Dearest Lyric,

Every time I think of your name, I remember the little girl dancing around the base at Naboo, making each one of those hardened warriors smile with your energy. Now my own energy is at its end, and I want you to know I wish you nothing but love in the future. Take care of Poe; he'll be the leader now and will need you more than ever. Help him discover the leader I know is inside him. If you can help Rey with Ben, then please do. Already the effects of the changes in Ben, and Hux, have made things more balanced. Speaking of Hux, I know your anger right now might be white hot, but don't give up on him, Lyric. There's still love in him, and he will remember it in the end. By the time you read this, I will be gone, returned to the Force from which we all come and to which we all return. I will give your love to Ciara, and Shara, and Kes and watch as you become the woman we all knew you would be.

There was no signature, just a large LOS. She raised her eyes, blinking back tears but failing miserably. Marab took her hand, held it within his own as he searched her face.

"When?" It was hard to get words past the knot in her throat.

"Two days. She gave me this a few weeks ago, told me I'd be running into you before she did. I should have known better than to laugh at her."

"Poor Ren. Does he know?"

Marab shrugged. "Rey was with her when she passed, so I would imagine he was there as well."

"What happened?"

"After the Raddus she was never the same. Her body just gave up. She was on Naboo, so they were going to burn her according to Alderaan's customs."

Lyric sighed as she struggled to sit up in bed. Marab watched for a moment, then helped to pull her torso into a sitting position. She smiled in gratitude as he returned to sitting beside her.

"Lyric, why me?"

"Because I needed someone brave and crazy enough to bypass a star destroyer. I couldn't ask Poe, so I got in touch with the only other person I knew who was seriously crazy."

He laughed. "I didn't think you'd notice the frequency written on your hand."

"Oh, I noticed." She looked quickly away. "I also knew you would come."

He smirked as he asked her, "How did you know that."

She chewed on the inside of her lip before answering. "Because Kez Marab, no one who kisses a woman like you kissed me, would pass on the opportunity to kiss her again. Or so I hoped."

Marab laughed hard at that. He stood up and crossed the cabin to stand by the porthole. "Yeah, that kinda sums it up doesn't it? But before we go a parsec further, what did Hux do that made you finally say you'd had enough."

It took a long moment for her to commit to trusting him. Each time she'd trusted someone, they'd ended up screwing her over. At least he was upfront about what he wanted compared to those who'd masked their desires behind friendship and love.
"He's been cheating on me."

"That man is the biggest idiot in the whole fucking galaxy."

"What do you mean," she frowned at him.

"I mean, look at you. Even pregnant you're sexy as hell, and he's fucking something else? Either he's an idiot, or you're the worst piece of ass in the galaxy, which I have a really hard time believing after having kissed you. A really hard time."

Her blush was fiery crimson, and he strode to the bed, putting his arms around her and kissing her again.

So, she hadn't just imagined it. The man could kiss, oh my stars could he kiss. For the moment, the universe stopped and all that existed was the two of them. She couldn't see, couldn't think, could only concentrate on the rush of heat to her crotch and an irrational desire to feel his magical mouth kissing her there.

His fingers wound through her hair as hers ran lightly over the features of his face, learning them as if she were blind. Learning to remember when he was gone, and reality crashed back down on her and crushed her with its cruelty. Tears gathered again in her eyes, and this time he kissed them away, the heat of his mouth burning a trail across her face.

Then his mouth trailed lower, to her neck, to her valley between her breasts, to the curve of her extended belly, to the apex of her legs, and rational thoughts disappeared as she relaxed into his touch, so soft and gentle and his mouth, teasing and swirling around until she didn't know where she ended and he began.

When their clothes ended up on the ground she didn't know. Nor when he rolled her onto her side, back to his chest as his fingers split her folds, moisture seeping from her in waves, her head lolled back on his shoulder, and when he pulled her left leg over his, then slid into her heat, she cried out at the rumble building inside her soul.

"Lyric," his voice was strangled in her ears. "Oh gods, Lyric I was right. Hux is a fucking idiot."

Tenderness showed in the gentleness of his fingers as he held her at just the right angle to hit that spot he knew would drive her insane. Tenderness brushed the backs of his hands across her overly sensitive breasts and they both moaned as she twitched around him in response. Tenderness ran his teeth lightly over her skin as she began to crest the flood of emotion he released in her.

She came, not hard, but in a rolling, languid wave that merged into his orgasm, and afterward they lay together on the bed, panting hard, half dressed, and suddenly incredibly shy in each other's company. He pulled his softening cock out of her, and made to rise when her hand stopped him.

"Don't go." Whispered with a raw pain, and so he pulled his clothes the rest of the way off and slid next to her. Offered her the safety of his arms, then listened as she burrowed against him, spilling out the story of her humiliation and rejection at the hands of Armitage Hux.

"Let me get this straight," his voice rumbled in her ear. "You offered to do whatever he wanted, and the man still goes to pain houses?"

"Is that what they're called?"

"I don't know the official name, but that's what they are. Popular during the Imperial ages, I guess he learned from his daddy. Brendol was a piece of work, or so I've heard."
Lyric shuddered in memory of stories Armitage told her. "You have no idea."

"So, what now?" He played with her hair as she stared straight ahead. "I take you to these coordinates, you hide out for a while, you give birth, then what"

"I don't know. But I don't want to know right now. I want days where I can sleep until I wake, run barefoot through the grass if I want without worrying who's watching, and never let my heart get hurt again. But I know that won't happen, so I'm going to settle for not being fooled again. The rest will come."

"As you told me before, he'd not going to let you just walk away."

"I know. But he can't meet my conditions to remain married. Therefore, it is only a matter of time before I'll be free to move on. Be who I want when I want."

Marab looked at her, his face filled with seriousness. "You know I'm not a family kind of guy, pretty lady. I have no intentions of settling down. I like you fine, and you're an amazing piece of ass, but nothing will make me settle down to raise Armitage Hux's brat."

The light slammed closed in her eyes, and she stood rapidly, nude and flushed with anger, crossing to her bag and removing a piece of paper. She thrust it into his hands.

"Just get me to these coordinates, and then you can run off back to your life. I was a fool to come here. An itch I shouldn't have scratched."

"Lyric, let me explain."

"Get. Out. Now." She hissed each word as she backed him toward the cabin door. Once he was into the hallway, she slammed the door and locked it against him.

*****

It took ten hours for Punisher to call.

Marab's communicator beeped. "Kez Marab."

Armitage's voice filled the cockpit. Lyric, sitting in the co-pilot seat studious ignored the sound.

"Where is my wife, you sack of bantha shit?"

"Last time I saw her, she was bouncing her sweet tits up the ramp of your shuttle. Have you lost her again?"

"Don't fuck with me, Marab, I've had a very bad week, and I'd love to take it out on someone. Now, one more time, where is Lyric."

"Hux, you really need to pull your head of your ass. You've been paying to tie someone up when you have this beautiful, sexy as fuck woman willing to do whatever you ask? You deserved to lose her."

"I suppose she'd be better off with a smuggler like you?"

"I'd never lie to her, and I'd certainly never fuck around on her. If I was tired of her, I'd set her free, let her find her own horizon and captain her own destiny."

Marab's eyes drank her body with undisguised lust. "How in the galaxy did you not find her
"This is not a conversation I intend to have with you, scum."

"Since she ain't speaking, you might as well say your piece, so we can get on with our journey."

"She's on the line?" She heard the cold crack of his voice, and steeled herself for whatever consequences he wanted to throw at her. "Lyric?"

She toggled her headset. "Armitage."

"Lyric, what are you doing? Come back and we can talk this over."

"As for what I'm doing, I'm busy piloting a freighter. As for the rest, talk over what? You cheated on me. I offered myself to you, body and soul, and you spit on me."

"I know, I made a huge mistake. Please." The agony in his voice almost broke her resolve.

"You hurt me. I can't trust you," she whispered, tears choking her sight. Kez placed his hand on her arm, nodding his support. "I need to get away. Think."

"Lyric, you have a very high-risk pregnancy and need to be under a doctor's care. You need to come home." His voice cracked at the end, and she could see him in her mind's eye. Hands clenched, jaw sharp with anger. "Please, come home."

Kez saw she was unable to respond, keyed his own mic. "We're going to have to cut this short Hugs, lots going on over here."

"What's wrong?"

"Listen Hugs, I don't like you and you don't like me, so I'm going to do what I wanted to in the first place and tell you the truth. She's been crying since I picked her up on Arkanis. I don't think she's held any food down, and she won't let anyone but me touch her. She alternates between raw, grieving pain, and homicidal anger. One minute she wants me to fuck her silly to help her feel better, to feel desirable since you've made her feel like trash, and the next she's holding a knife to my balls swearing off all men.

Kez stared at her, his eyes black, his hand pulling hers to his hard cock. "But I will tell you this, you sanctimonious Imperial git. I would fuck her, good and hard, a thousand times if I thought it would get the stain of your touch out of her system. She still loves you, though gods know you don't deserve it. She's asked me to deliver her somewhere, and that's exactly what I'm going to do. Then I'm going to get drunk and try to forget the sound of her laugh, and the smell of lavender in her hair."

He cut the connection and pulled her awkwardly into his lap. Her fingers freed his cock, and she slid down on him with a shudder racing through her system. He fucked her hard and slow, his eyes locked on hers, as she rolled her hips to scratch that special sweet spot inside. When he sped up to chase his finish, she was already coming apart on him, calling his name as the universe spun around them.

"Why the hell can I not get you out of my system?" he whispered to her neck. "The more I'm inside you, the more it feels like home?"

At that she stood, fluid dripping from her as she left the cockpit for the safety of the cabin. Kez rolled his eyes then pulled up his pants and followed her. Damn it, he'd fucked up again, talking
about futures. By the time he made the cabin, she was changing into pants and a black tunic, ready for the next stage of her disappearance. Her face was set in a mask of nothing, and it killed him.

"I'm sorry Lyre, you know I wish things could be different, that I could be different."

"You made your stand clear from the moment I set foot on board, Kez. I don't know what you continue apologizing about. We both got what we wanted out of this arrangement."

He forced her to look at him. The hurt in her eyes was overwhelming, she radiated unhappiness in every line of her body. "Lyric, you cannot just disappear into space and think I'll let you run off. That piece of shit is right about one thing, you are a high-risk patient, and if I had any sense at all, I'd drop you at the closest First Order med-base and run like hell."

"I know that Kez, I'm not trying to kill myself."

"Are you sure?"

He cupped her face in his hands. Leaned his forehead against hers, as if he could make his thoughts simply jump from his mind to hers. "Why not let me take you wherever you're headed? This is the middle of dead space."

"There should be a ship, uncloaking just of our port bow."

Sure enough, the large black First Order liner belonged to the Supreme Leader, and Kylo Ren and his wife Rey were waiting in the receiving bay for the escape pod from 'Kestrel'. Ten minutes later both ships were on their way, long gone before Punisher appeared out of hyperspace looking for them.
Chapter Twenty-five

As Kez Marab and the 'Kestrel' led Armitage on a wild chase across the Unknown Regions, Ren and Rey piloted Lyric back to Arkanis, where Bella met the ship with a complete medical team. While Hux burned out unknown space looking for her, she was back in the panic room on Arkanis, this time to stay. The Supreme Leader put his foot down and insisted she listen to the doctors for the remainder of her pregnancy. The price of her meek cooperation was the requirement Hux not be told where she went. She wanted to know how long it would take him to work it out.

The morning a week later when Punisher arrived in the skies above Arkanis, Bella met her brother in the front room of the family castle.

"Where is my wife, Bella? I'm getting very tired of people keeping her from me?"

"You put that distance between the two of you. She simply wanted you to hurt as badly as she does. She's an artist, with wildly chaotic emotions even when not pregnant. You ripped her heart out and spit on it, Armitage. Why wouldn't she be upset?"

"I know, I know, I know. You and almost everyone in the galaxy has let me know, in no uncertain terms, that I am the biggest fuck-up around. All I want is the chance to put my family together."

At that moment, one of the maids interrupted their meeting. "Pardon milord, milady, but Lady Lyric is in labor."

*****

He ran as thought she might disappear before he could get to her rooms. The past few weeks had been the most psychologically devastating he'd endured since he'd lost her years before. Marab led him a merry chase, only to confess the ruse days after she left. Hux ground his teeth as he recalled that nightmarish conversation.

Marab taunted him from the start. "You know I fucked her. More than once. I would tell you how amazing it was, but I guess you already know that."
"You swine," he'd seethed. "She carrying my child."

The smuggler had to gall to sound amused. "I'm going to give you some hard truths Hugs. You can take them or leave them. I don't care about you. But I do care about her, more than I should damn it, but the woman gets under my skin. You crushed her, heart and soul. You made her feel worthless, ugly, undesirable. I make her feel sexy, powerful, and it makes her wet that I wanted her enough to risk everything to be with her. Can you see why she chose me over you?"

"I adore her, I love her more than my own life."

Marab laughed, actually laughed at that. "Then why not give her what she asked? She wanted you to teach her about your 'hidden lifestyle', and instead you made the most beautiful woman in the galaxy feel ugly and unloved. That's why I made love to her Armitage, not to take anything from you, to give her back what she needed most."

"What's that, you scum?"

"Her dignity."

Now she was here, somewhere hidden from him, and she needed him. No, that wasn't right. He needed her. Since she'd been missing, everything had gone to shit, and he needed her. He couldn't sleep, he couldn't work, he couldn't eat, nothing was going right since he'd left her behind on Coruscant.

He'd been a fool, and if she would let him, he'd spent the rest of their lives making it up to her, to them both. But first she had to accept his apology, accept him. When he reached her room, she'd been holding onto the wall, holding her back, breathing heavily.

"Why is he here?" she demanded of Bella.

"Love," he began but another contraction cut him off.

When she'd finished cursing, he'd taken her arm, let her lean against him as they walked around the room. Bella left to call the doctor, leaving them to walk in circles around the floor.

"I hate you," she started. "You lied to me, you cheated on me with whores after I practically threw myself at your feet and begged you to teach me what you needed. I am so ashamed."

They paused for her to breathe through another contraction. Soon as the pain eased, she began walking and screaming again.

"And that man, that man who claimed to be my father, he knew what you'd been doing. But did I? No, which makes me wonder how many people know how you've shamed me. I can't walk down the streets without wondering who knows, or worse will some slut come up and show me a child with your face."

This time when they stopped for her contraction, she hauled off and smacked the crap out of him. He stood there and let her work her anger out.

"I told you, I told you from the beginning not to do this, and you did anyway. I hate you."

When she raised her left hand to smack him again, he gently grabbed her fist and pulled it to him, wrapping his arms around her, as she shook with sobs of deep grief. Each jagged draw dove the knife deeper into his heart, and he began to cry along with her.
"I'm so sorry. You can't possibly hate me more than I hate myself. Just, please give me a chance."

She shook her head and tried to pull away, but the doctor was arriving, and the contractions were growing stronger than ever, and his arms were all that held her up as they moved her back to the delivery room. They examined her, and when the doctors conferred he knew it wasn't good.

"Field Marshall, with her blood pressure issues we want to go ahead and take the child. In the long run, it will be safer for both Lady Hux and the baby."

Dully he nodded his consent, watched as she turned her face from him, screaming at him to leave, sobbing for him to stay, pleading with him to stop the pain. As they wheeled her away from him, her fingers had to be pried from his, so he could don the required gear to enter the surgical room. When he saw her again, though they'd doubled her medication, her eyes were wild with fear. She felt very alone.

He crossed to her, kissing her forehead, telling her everything would be fine.

"No, no it won't. Something's wrong."

"No love, this is to make sure everything stays right. The doctors want you and the baby safe."

"Stay with me."

"Always."

Once the decision to operate was made, the team moved quickly. As he held her hand, the doctors made two laser incisions on her lower abdomen, at the public bone. A minute later they heard the squall of their child.

"Congratulations Field Marshall, Lady Hux. It's a boy."

Then, "Lady Hux? Lyric?"

The monitor on her heart rate and blood pressure alarmed as she crashed.

As one team took his son, another took over with his wife. Hux didn't know which direction to move. A quick glance at his son told him the baby was fine, but Lyric was not. Tears fell from his eyes and he was helpless to make them stop. On the one hand, his son needed him, but on the other, who would he be if he lost her for good?

He could not escape who he was, but he could make sure he never made her feel unloved again.
Chapter Twenty-six - Building Bridges

She was drifting through the void again, unaware of where she was. There was a vague memory of Armitage being there, then arguing, and then the baby. The baby came. It was what? She couldn't remember if it was a boy or a girl. All she could hear was the sound of the alarms telling them she was dying. Dying again.

Hux. She needed to let him know she forgave him. For all of it. In retrospect it meant so little. Well, except for the whores. That mattered. He'd need to be better for his son, for his next wife. Maybe she helped him with that aspect. The next wife would be one he would be proud of, who'd live.

There was someone with her, someone she didn't know. A soothing presence on the edges of her awareness. It didn't feel like the previous Force ghost she spoke with, but someone she should know. It was warm and filled with laughter and mischief.

The presence led her upward, toward consciousness. She opened her eyes and heard a baby crying. It took a moment for her to focus. She was in a hospital room, she couldn't remember where. Frowning, she struggled to set her feet on the ground. The crib was only a few steps away, and the presence seemed to want her at the crib. At last she stood, testing her balance.

There were leads attached to her everywhere, but she just pulled them off, desperate to get to the crying baby in the crib. Her baby. He needed her. As she gripped the side of the crib, she looked down into Armitage's light blue eyes. A thin fuzz of black curly hair covered his skull, and once he saw his mother's face, his crying switched tune from fear to hunger.

Her breasts began to leak, needing to be emptied of the much needed first milk for her son. She slipped her hand under his neck and scooped him up into her arms. She dropped one arm from the medical gown and latched him onto her breast as if she knew what she was doing. Exhausted she turned to find somewhere to sit while nursing him, and ran smack into her husband.
Armitage looked like shit. His uniform was wrinkled and half missing, his hair uncombed and he hadn't shaved in weeks. She was suddenly very weak. He looked angry, and yet relieved.

"The baby was crying," she whispered.

"I know," he replied. "You should be in bed. You might rip out staples."

He slid an arm around her waist, helping her those last few steps back to the bed. Once settled, he watched silently as their son nursed loudly.

"Lyric," he began but she held up her hand.

"Not now, Armitage. I just can't fight anymore."

Tears leaked out despite her insistence she wouldn't let him hurt her again. Once the baby finished, she held him up to her shoulder to burp. Afterward, as he fell asleep, she returned her attention to her child's father.

"What happened?" She was unaware of anything since arriving at the medical center.

"They were worried about your blood pressure crashing, which it did as soon as they removed our son. I watched you die again, Lyric. In my arms, with your abdomen sliced open and my child on your chest, you died and left us alone."

He lifted his pain scarred face to hers. "Don't leave us alone, please."

"How am I here?"

"Rey and Ren. They kept your heart beating while the doctors sutured your stomach, then massive transfusions and time. The nurses tried to get him to latch on while you were out, but all he would do is cry."

She smiled weakly. "He wanted his mother to wake up."

He played with her fingers, overjoyed at the warmth he felt creeping back after hours of being cold and unresponsive. The baby lay on her lap looking up at his parents, and Hux felt a wrench of pain in his chest. He thought he'd known what love was, but here, looking at them, he realized that he'd been a fool. This was where he belonged. Without them, no star destroyer would hold his interest.

"He needs a name."

He looked at her, noted the dark circles under her eyes, and the hollow of her cheeks. Her skin had a translucence showing her physical frailty. He'd done that, pushed her to exhaustion as he chased, trying to force her to see his point of view. He'd been weak and returned to the outlets Snoke had encouraged him to pursue, and he'd broken her. The one thing he'd fought for, fought to own and possess and he'd broken her as completely as any whore he'd ever bound. Without using a single whip, save his own weakness. He wondered if Snoke ever realized how powerful a force love could be.

"Do you have any preferences?"

Her voice was low, filled with regrets and sorrows.

"Sloan."
He smiled. "Where did that come from?"

"I have no idea." A faint smile played around the edges of her mouth.

"Lyric, I am so sorry."

Her smile disappeared. "I don't want any more apologies, I want you to be true to your promises, or let me go free. I can't, I can't handle disappointment any longer."

"I know. I will be better."

"Actions speak louder than any words you can throw at me."

She took her hands away and pulled the baby to her arms. He watched in amazement as she bonded with their son, staring at his son and rubbing her finger lightly over his cheeks. The longer he watched her, the deeper he fell.

"Armitage, have you let your sister see him?"

"She saw him while the doctors were saving you. Bella said to tell you he's beautiful and she'll be back later once she's had a chance to bathe and change."

"What about Madam Izzerah?"

"Is terribly disappointed he is a boy, but swears to love him anyway."

"Poe?"

"I had Phasma send a flare. You can send a message yourself when you feel better."

She lay back against the pillows and closed her eyes.

It was eating at him. He had to know.

"Kez Marab."

"Yes." Her face was a flat mask.

"Yes what?"

Her eyes stared at the baby, her hair draped around her face.

Hux felt his face mirroring the pain inside his heart. No matter how bad he wanted to hear the truth from her mouth. "What happened?"

"He made me feel beautiful, when you made me feel worthless."

"I pushed you right to him, didn't I?"

"Not with words, but your actions certainly did." While there were tears in her eyes, she was calm and controlled, no longer afraid of him, but of losing him when she'd just discovered how much he did mean to her. "We need to have a long, serious talk Armitage, about this marriage and what happens next. I saw your tests were all negative, so you may stay around us. But you are on serious notice and will not go anywhere without Phasma calling me to report where you are and what you are doing there."
"You can't order my men around." His smile was tender, his heart almost ready to dare to beat again. He took the sleeping baby from her arms and placed him back in the warming crib.

"She volunteered to keep you on the straight. As have a dozen other officers on Punisher and here on Arkanis. Ren however, volunteered to Force choke you until I was happy. That option isn't completely off the table. You seem to stay in line better when threatened. I wonder if I could be taught how to do it myself?"

He looked up at her, shaking his head in resignation. "I fucked up huge, and I know it. But you and Sloan are my world now. I don't intend to make either of you hurt like this ever again. My son will have a better father than his father had."

Later, when the baby cried again, this time Hux pulled his son from the crib and helped his wife get the baby latched on. For the first time since he could remember, Armitage Hux felt happy.

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The frequency hummed, scaring Poe so badly, he fell off the ladder he was on while making some modifications to his fighter. Pulling it out, he found his hand shaking as he stabbed at the button.

"Dameron here."

The voice which came through was not the one he was expecting. "Dameron, Hux. I thought you'd like to know Lyric is doing well, but her recuperation will be a long one. The baby is amazing, just perfect, and with what's going to be a head full of black curls."

"Thank you, Armitage. I appreciate that knowledge more than you know. Can I speak with her?"

"She and Sloan are both sleeping right now. I'll have her call next moment she can."

"I'll be waiting."

There was a long pause, and Poe thought the other man had clicked off. Suddenly he heard the pick-up key switched. "Dameron, what would you say to joining our peace negotiation on Coruscant in two months?"

"Is that a joke? You think I'd just fly right into a First Order trap?"

"No, I'm not joking and I'm not trying to set you up. The Inner Rim planets are ready to come to the table. They see the stability Ren and I are bringing to the galaxy and are ready to sit down with the First Order and discuss how to bring real order and peace to all systems. There is a place for the Resistance in these talks, if you have the balls to learn how true diplomacy works."

Hux continued before Poe could refuse again. "Lyric and the baby will be on planet, and she'd love to see you, introduce him."

Dameron smiled wide. "In that case, the Resistance will be there and ready to discuss all options for peace, so long as they include everyone."

"I don't need to tell you Dameron, that any sort of violence during these talks by the Resistance will be met with stiff punishment. This is an opportunity that might not come along again."

"Understood, Hugs."

"One more thing Dameron."
"Yes?"

"I'd like you to pass along a message to one of your friends?"

"Who?" Poe suddenly felt ice in his veins. Finn, the bastard hadn't forgotten about FN-2187.

"If you run into Kez Marab out there in the far-flung backwaters where you're hiding, tell him his days are numbered. I will find him and when I do, it won't be a quick painless death, I promise him that."

Dameron felt a chill run up his back, despite the warmth of the day. "What did Marab do?"

"He knows what he did. Tell him the only reason he's still breathing right now is a promise made to my wife. But space is a very cold, unforgiving place, and my memory is long."

This time the connection did click off.

Dameron wasted no time in tracking down the smuggler/privateer. He found him blind drunk at Maz Kenata's newest watering hole. Dameron had known Marab a long time, but he'd never seen the normally well groomed, reckless adventurer looking this miserable, this defeated. If he didn't know better, he'd think Marab was in love.

"Kez, old buddy, what the hell happened to you?"

Marab bleared at him through eyes that moved in two different directions at the same time, with a cologne of whiskey that would knock out a tauntaun. "Dameron?"

"Yes buddy, let's get you sobered up, okay?"

"Won't help," Marab muttered as he slid back to the bar. "Too late."

Then he narrowed his focus onto Poe's face. "All your damn fault. Asked me to find her, didn't tell me she was a fucking goddess. Now my life is shit, and it's all your fault."

Marab then proceeded to pass out and slide less than gracefully down to the floor. Dameron stared at the wreckage he knew and shook his head. He glanced up at Maz, who'd brought over two bouncers to pick up the unconscious man and deposit him in one her rooms. Maz shook her head as well.

"I've never seen him like this either. Showed up three days ago, climbed into a barrel of Corellian whiskey, and hasn't surfaced since. Never seen love hit a man so hard."

"Love?" Dameron frowned. "The woman hasn't been born that Kez Marab couldn't walk away from."

Max tightened her goggles and stared at Poe. "Oh, she has, and she's currently recuperating on Arkanis after giving birth to Armitage Hux's son."

Dameron felt the floor drop out from under his feet.

She laughed at his discomfort. "You sent him to her, now you're amazed that he's in love with her? When she wanted to run away from Armitage Hux two months ago, it was to Kez Marab that she ran. And once he took a taste of her, there was no going back. Listen to me Poe. Lyric must remain with Hux. The Force has brought balance to the two most powerful men in the First Order. The desires of one smuggler cannot be allowed to derail peace in the galaxy."
"What does Lyric think about all this?"

"Lyric is a child of the Force, she understands better than you or I about what is required. The good part is, she loves Hux, despite all they have been through. And sources tell me the man has truly changed since her last stunt. Running off with Marab did show Hux how much his wife means to him, which is a very good thing. Now we must make sure our young friend in there doesn't sober up and fly off to kidnap his true love. I expect you to remind him of that necessity."

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When Kez opened his eyes, the first thing that hit him was the blinding hangover that threatened to make him puke uncontrollably. The second thing that hit him was the reason he was drinking. Groaning he rolled over, put his feet on the floor and announced to the air at large, "I am so screwed."

"Yeah, you are buddy." The voice was familiar but Marab couldn't think fast enough to recognize the threat.

"Dameron?"

"Come on asshole, let's get you in the shower."

An hour later, clean and working on sober, Marab and Dameron caught up while eating breakfast as Maz puttered around the bar, cleaning.

"What the hell happened between you and my cousin?" Dameron's jaw was tight, his eyes carefully neutral.

"Why? What have you heard?"

"Um, you mean other than a message from Hugs to tell you your days are numbered? Nothing."

Marab sat back in his chair, grey eyes stormy. "I fucked up, and it's all your fault."

"My fault?"

"Yeah Dameron, you should have warned me how easy it would be to love her."

"Does she reciprocate?"

"I don't know. If a woman screams your name more than five times when she's coming, does that equate to love?"

Poe stared at his friend, venom dripping. "No wonder Hugs is going to kill you. I might be tempted myself if you don't shut up now."

"Have you talked with her?"

Poe shook his head. "She gave birth, a boy, about a week ago now. There were complications."

"Is she alright?" Marab noticed his knuckles were white from the strain of pretending it didn't matter.

"Weak but getting better. Baby is good, apparently black hair with Hux's blue eyes."

Marab stared into distance, caught up in his memories. Poe put his hand on his friend's arm. Marab
stared at him, veil sliding over his eyes.

"Kez, she made her choice. We both have to let her go."

Shaking his head, the blonde man continued to stare off, "No, there's a wedge between them now, and under the right circumstances, I think we could get her away from Hux. He's been a very bad boy, and perhaps we can exploit that weakness."

"Kez, I love my cousin like my life, but I will not break up a family just so you can be with your flavor of the month. In two months the Resistance is supposed to sit down to peace talks. How can I do that if you're chasing Lyric?"

Marab brightened. "Perfect! I'll go to Coruscant with you as your assistant. Then we can wait for an opening to spring her."

Poe shook his head. "No, we won't. You have to let her go."

Marab stared off in the distance. "Never."
Hello everyone!

We've reached the end of part one of this story. I want to say thank you so much for reading my story. Armitage isn't everyone's favorite, but I find him an interesting character to study. He has so many issues, he'd make therapists rich for decades, but I like the complicated one. Also, gotta admit I'm a huge Domhnall Gleeson fan. Love Irishmen... yeah.

Part Two - Arabesque will focus on the First Order negotiations, of which Poe is an invited delegate. A true spirit of cooperation seems to be on the verge of bringing the last vestiges of resistance into the fold, until extremists attempt to derail the process. When an important member of the team goes missing, Lyric refuses to stay behind when Hux, Ren, and Rey go out to battle the last resistance to the final victory of the First Order.

Of course, I would love any suggestions, comments or questions, as I'll be the first to admit, I write to please myself. I hope these stories please you too.
Recuperation

Chapter Summary

Lyric recuperates and Armitage learns about fatherhood

Chapter Notes

This marks the beginning of Part Two. I don't know if each chapter will have a song selection, but certain ones will be referenced as we go along. This chapter is a little longer than usual, but I just couldn't decide where to break.

Thanks so much for enjoying!

Recuperating

Three weeks after giving birth Lyric Bey-Hux was allowed to leave the medical unit and return home with her husband and son. She wore a blue linen dress and rode most of the way from the hospital room to the speeder in a chair, was lifted into the speeder by troopers and shielded from public view as much as possible. Once alone inside their apartments, Bella Hux and the nurse maid waited to help with Sloan as Hux got Lyric resettled into bed. Sloan, perfect baby that he was, didn't cry once.

Hux was on family leave for the time being, as Ren and Rey completed their research on the ass-wipe who claimed to be Lyric's father and the timetable for the peace negotiations crept up on them all. Ren promised they'd be on Coruscant in plenty of time for him to assist with these political games. In the meantime, Hux was filtering everything through Phasma and Mitaka while he did 'daddy duty' at home.

Those first three weeks for Lyric were touch and go until her blood supply evened out and all the hurts and rips from the initial crash were finally repaired as well. Each day her strength grew a little more, and Hux was proud of her tenacity. At the eight-week post birth appointment, the doctors did throw some hard truths on them.

"Lady Hux, you're healing very well from the C-section surgery. I would expect your monthly cycles to begin again soon. Which leads us to a frank discussion. Female contraceptives have a 99% efficacy, male contraceptives are only 92%. Normally, I would stay out of these talks, but there are other things you need to take into consideration as well, such as your blood pressure and general weaken condition."

Hux sat still beside Lyric, a strange calm settling over him as he realized where this conversation was heading. It was one he'd had with himself ten times over since Sloan's birth, but knew of no way to broach it with his still emotionally bruised wife. Hell, there were still days when she'd curse his name in three different languages, how was he supposed to talk to her about birth control? The
doctor however, didn't know the dangerous waters into which he was treading.

"There are three courses of action. The easiest would be for you Field Marshall, to take the implant and perhaps use prophylactics when chances of pregnancy are greatest. I would not suggest an implant for Lady Hux, given her blood pressure problems. Too many dangers for blood clots. The last resort would be temporary sterilization until her system stabilizes. There are reversible methods, but it would be another surgery for her."

"Get out." Her voice was low and dangerous, and the man was clearly not used to dealing with a temperament like Lyric.

"Lord Hux, she simply could not survive another pregnancy for several years. Her system needs time to stabilize, heal properly. Something should be done."

"I assure you we will take your concerns under advisement. Now leave us please. We desire time alone."

"Of course, Field Marshall." The doctor quickly fled the room as she lay back in bed, staring at the ceiling, fuming.

Hux smiled at his broody wife. "Go ahead, love. Tell me what you're upset about."

"Besides being talked about like I'm a prized broodmare?"

Hux sat beside her on the bed, leaning her against his chest with his arms around her. "I applaud the man for having your health in mind, but he has all the tact of a mooft-milker. You're weak, you know that. No one wants an accidental pregnancy until you've recovered. Especially me."

"Armi, I love you dearly but the mere thought of sex at this moment makes me want to throw something. I'm still dealing with emotions that are all over the chart, learning how to feed our son, my breasts are so full it seems like that's my only purpose in life, and I can't feel anything from the waist down because of the damn surgery. Sex is nowhere on my current agenda, and I hope you don't mind. If you need a hand however, I'm there for you."

He studied that pale complexion, the dark circles still there despite daily infusions of iron and red blood cells. Her skin was no longer translucent, and for the first time in months she was gaining muscle and not fat, thanks to daily walks with the three of them. Her amber eyes no longer were dull with heartsickness, but the distance between them while shrinking daily, still had a few potholes left to repair.

Before he could answer, Sloan cried out for his late afternoon feeding.

"Stay put," he motioned her. "I'll bring him to you."

The crib was in the next room, and his son wasn't shy about letting his parents know when he was ready to nurse. When Armitage approached, the tone of the cry switched to one of happy hungry. Sloan was glad to see his father, as most days the nurse maid took him to and from Lyric's bedside, and Hux only saw his family late at night or early morning.

Scooping up the baby, he noted the wet diaper and made a quick detour to the changing table.

"Good evening my son," he cooed at the wriggling baby as he changed him. "Were you a good boy for your mother today? She's still very fragile you know, you mustn't be too rough with her yet."

As he spoke, Hux noted how very intently Sloan listened to his words, as if he knew what they
meant. Once he'd changed the baby and picked him up, he wondered again at just how Force sensitive his son would be, despite Lyric's assurances he was no dark knight, like Ren.

"There're my boys," Lyric smiled and held out her arms for the still hungry bundle of blankets she knew comprised Sloan, while her eyes held out love for this side of the conflicted and difficult man she'd come to know as her husband. "Is mama's boy ready to eat?"

Her dress opened in the front, as did her bra to release one of her breasts for the baby to nurse. As there was no one in the room other than them, he stayed her hand to keep the covering cloth off. When others were around, he insisted on the covering, but tonight, he watched avidly as his son nursed, one small hand pressed against Lyric's skin, drawing both food and love from her as she watched Hux's enraptured face.

"Tell me how it feels," he asked her intently.

"It's hard to describe. It's the most intense sucking, and then you feel the milk being gently pulled, releasing the pressure which feels amazing."

"I think I'm jealous of my son."

She smiled at him, then placed her palm against his cheek. His blue eyes met hers and the intense emotions between the two of them spilled over to include the melding of them now watching as he finished his dinner. "How can you be jealous of this angel?"

Hux smiled, "It's easy when he gets to spend so much time with you while I putter around everywhere making sure these damn peace talks of Ren's come off without a hitch. But the next week is us alone, at least during the days. Bella is here to take over with Sloan while we take our part in this show and afterwards, we're going to pump you empty then you and I are taking a ship and just going somewhere."

"That sounds wonderful, and exactly what the doctor is trying to shield me from, if I heard him correctly." Her smile was coy, yet her eyes hard. Though it hurt him to admit it, she did not trust him. Not yet. He still had to earn back her trust, and he would. He would.

"First of all, tomorrow afternoon I'm scheduled for the implant, which is at least 92% better than what we were doing before. We have Sloan, and when you're strong enough, we can give him a brother or sister."

"And the other 8%?" He didn't know there was a brighter red than supernova red.

"We cross that bridge when we get there. There's lots of things that can be done, if you're willing to believe in me. Willing to float a little trust my way?"

Sloan finished eating and she moved him up to her shoulder to gently work the trapped air from his belly. He lay on her shoulder, a sleepy, content, milk-filled blob of baby, and it was the most precious thing Hux'd ever seen. After the required belch, Hux removed Sloan from her shoulder, and returned him to the nursemaid. When he returned to their bedroom, she was cleansing her nipples and using a crème one of the nurses recommended to prevent them from cracking. She motioned him closer.

"I'm willing to give you a little trust. But don't try and take advantage of my good mood." Her smile was sunshine, the first he'd seen in weeks. Since before she found out he'd cheated. For a moment, the iron band around his chest eased a little and he could breathe without the sharp stabbing pain he'd felt every time he thought about losing her.
He sat at his desk and watched her moving gingerly around the bedroom. She'd only had the last external staples removed two weeks ago, and the wicked red scar on her lower abdomen upset him for entirely different reasons than it upset Lyric. To Hux, it reminded him of her death and resurrection after giving birth. To Lyric, they were the battle scars of her pregnancy. An impossible child, conceived under impossible odds. While bacta worked wonders, there were limitations, as her dead nerves proved.

Tonight, she set her sights on taking a shower all alone. It took all his willpower to let her into the fresher alone, though the concession had been the door had to stay open, in case she should get into any trouble. When she'd stepped out of the fresher, he'd been waiting with a warm towel and deep, meaningful kisses.

"Let me walk back to the bed," she grumbled. "I need the extra push."

He stepped back, following her like an over-protective hen as she limped back to the bedroom, stopping on the way to check on Sloan, napping peacefully in his crib.

When she reached the bedside, he smiled and applauded. "Congratulations love, that's a big accomplishment."

"Come to bed early Armitage, I miss falling asleep in your arms."

Since the horrific birth, Lyric had been kept in the med-bay for health reasons. Which meant no room in the bed for more than her and the baby. Tonight, she only wore the blood pressure alarm and it was a race to see who could be ready first. When they met in the hall outside their dressing rooms, Armitage could wait no longer. He swept her into his arms and carried her to their large bed, where he'd been alone for more months than he cared to remember.

Both smiled as each realized the other had chosen to come to bed already naked. He needed to reassure himself she did still love him, still loved the feel of his skin against hers, knowing how he'd broken their vows to each other. Yet she still allowed him to sleep next to her, so long as he remained faithful. He pulled her into the circle of his arms as he leaned up on one elbow. She lay on the bed under him, as he grabbed a small jar of lavender balm from a side table.

"What's that?" Her voice was husky with love.

"For those laser scars. Ren had this made up for you. He's used it for lightning burns from Snoke. Should help heal that numb feeling as well by helping the nerves regenerate."

Lyric shook her head. "They told me it could be months before the feeling returns. It's just a weirdness. I can feel my waist, and I can feel my crotch. But I can't feel anything in-between."

Armitage pulled his bride into his arms, the balm of her peace already calming down his normally high-strung personality. He breathed deep of the lavender and sandalwood that comprised the basic essence of her. His hands began to wander along her sides, learning what had changed as a result of her body's voyage from maid to mother in a relatively short time span.

Her hips were rounder, fuller, and her thighs spread more as well. There was a small pooch to her lower abdomen, from the surgery, and her breasts were huge, filled with milk to the point of leaking if she didn't nurse or pump on schedule. He tweaked her nipples and chuckled when white liquid oozed from each one.

With a sudden mischief streak, he placed the closest nipple in his mouth and sucked lightly. The sudden burst of sweet buttermilk caught him by surprise, and she laughed at the expression on his
face. He burned with embarrassment until she kissed him deeply.

"So, am I a tasty food source for your son?" The laughter in her eyes hid the exhaustion he could hear in the weakness of her voice.

"My love, you are the only food source for my children. As for taste, I have nothing to compare it to, so the fact that Sloan loves it is all I need."

Her eyes searched his face, and he stared at her with the strangest sensation. Not just love, as his love for her filled him all the time. This was a linking of their souls that bound him to her in ways he couldn't express. Hux claimed her lips, pouring all his need into the expressions of his body.

With his mouth and hands, he worshiped every inch of her skin, bringing her to climax over and over without once actually penetrating her with his cock. Finally, she begged him to stop and let her catch her breath. Only then did he slowly push inside her, reveling in the tightness that remained as Sloan never traveled down her inner passage. It took all his concentration to not let go, because he wouldn't risk her health, not just for his own climax.

She trembled underneath his hands, and he slowly rocked against her, watching as her eyes rolled back in her head and her cunt clenched around him. His lips ran along her neck, down to the hollow of her throat, where his teeth and lips sucked and nibbled on the soft, warm skin. Using his thumbs, he worked slow circles around her nipples, smirking as each flick brought small gasps from her throat, and the warmth around his cock pulsed in waves.

At last, he could withhold no longer, and he pulled out to her disappointed moan, only for Lyric to guide her lips to his shaft and complete the task for him. After, they lay on the bed, breathing hard and simply listening to each other exist. No words were needed, not at this point. There were still hard conversations ahead, and like the selfish coward he knew he could be, he'd take whatever she freely gave. Any chance to rebuild what he'd so carelessly shattered he would seize and savor.

Finally, he listened to her lightly snore and smiled. She was finally asleep.

Standing, he crossed to his desk on the other side of the room. From the desk drawer he pulled out four boxes. Three she would recognize: her wedding rings, her collar, and matching cuffs. The fourth was a present. He'd had it made as a gift, a thank you to her for giving birth to his son.

Hux heard Sloan beginning to rustle through the intercom system they had setup in the apartments. He pulled on his sleeping pants then made his way to the nursery. His sister met him at the door.

Bella's face was surprised. "I thought you were taking the night off."

"I couldn't sleep. Did you make a bottle?"

She nodded, warming the frozen breast milk as he changed Sloan's wet diaper. His son gurgled with happiness, chattering in the magic language of babies and when he sat down in the lounging chair to feed him, Bella shook her head in wonder.

"Armitage Hux, planet killer, scourge of the galaxy, master of the First Order, night time nursery duty. If your enemies could see you now."

"Ha, ha, very funny. Lyric is finally sleeping, I couldn't, so head on back to bed and I'll return him to the nursery when he's back to sleep."

His sister cocked her head sideways, studying her brother intently.

"What?" He whispered, as to not disturb the night.
"I think she'll forgive you soon."

"What makes you think that?"

She nodded at Sloan in his arm, happily sucking the bottle of Lyric's breast milk. "Being there for your son is very sexy to a woman, especially one who has no family."

Bella left, leaving him staring down into his own eyes, but Lyric's features. Sloan was the perfect balance between the two of them, and always seemed to be studying the people around him as if they were experiments. He was a serious baby, but when he laughed, the sound was golden. And he loved to touch his parents.

Even now, Sloan had his hand wrapped around Hux's finger, refusing to let go of his father's attention. Hux stared back, willing his son to know how much he wanted to be a better father, a better human, than Brendol Hux. Armitage never wanted his son to cry himself to sleep at night not knowing if anyone in the galaxy knew or cared he existed. Never wanted strangers to mark his son's flesh with whips or worse over some imagined shortcoming.

Armitage gave little thought to his miserable childhood but watching his own son he wondered how deep his rage would be if someone were to hurt Sloan the way he'd been brutalized. Not that he wanted his son be to be wimp, but he'd die before subjecting his child to the training methods Brendol espoused. So, he would throw away everything his father taught him and replace it with what? That was the question. What to teach his son of the legacy he'd leave to him kept Hux wrestling with demons he'd thought long gone.

He heard a noise in the doorway and looked up to see Lyric leaning against the jam, wrapped in his robe, smiling as she watched them.

"You should be asleep," he whispered. "Go back to bed, he's almost through."

She shook her head, curling up instead on the regular bed on the far side of the room. From there, she watched him finish feeding, burping and bonding with their baby. Each time he looked in her direction, she was smiling, the look in her eyes one he'd not seen in quite a while.

When at last Hux returned a sleeping baby to his crib, Lyric rose from the bed to return with him to their own bedroom. Once there, she wrapped herself around him, giving herself over to her feelings without holding his transgressions against him, and he worshiped her for the blessing. Later, he spread his come over both their stomachs, then she pulled him tight so the liquid squished between them.

He grabbed a warm cloth and wiped them both clean before sliding back into the sheets. When she snuggled beside him, the pain in his heart eased further as she looked him in the eyes and whispered, "I love you" for the first time in months.

The next morning, he slid her wedding rings onto her left hand again, with a kiss and a promise to always be honest with her. She smiled at the return of her collar but refused to wear it until she could truly earn the honor. Instead she had him place on the cuffs, harder to read the meaning to outsiders, but a book of meaning to the two of them.

The fourth box was a male collar to match hers. She tilted her head in question.

"Lyric, I discovered much to my chagrin, that no matter how in control of myself or others I might be, I am your slave. A slave to my own slave, as it were. I find my only sanity is with you. You asked once for us to build a relationship within which we could each feel complete. I think this
might be the beginning of something incredible for us both."

She took the black titanium collar with amber clasp out of the box and held it in both hands. Her eyes looked at him from underneath those damn long lashes, innocence so sharp he could taste it on his hardening cock.

"You mean to wear this all the time?"

He nodded. "That's why it's looser. To sit underneath the collar of my uniform. Once the clasp is engaged, only your fingerprints will remove it. Because I will never leave you. That last stunt, it broke me, Lyric. It broke me. I'd rather take a blaster to the heart at close range than go through the misery of the past five months again."

Without a word, she fastened the collar around his neck, smiling as the clasp sealed to invisible. Then she pressed her lips to his, and the world spun around on it axis, reorienting to her as his center. Her mouth was sweet, and their tongues danced and wrestled until they were both panting and leaning against the wall.

Taking her hand, they returned to bed, for whatever sleep time they might have remaining before another day of duties and rehabilitation split them apart. He pulled her back to his chest, wrapping his legs around hers, as she moaned and wiggled contentedly.

"I swear," he breathed into her ear, "when they give you the final medical clearance, I'm going to fuck to you so hard, you'll walk funny for a week."

"Promises, promises." Her voice was full of sleep and love.

"Mm hm." They drifted off to sleep.
Chapter Summary

Armitage and Lyric present their son to the old blood of the galaxy, and Kez Marab has a conversation with Lyric.

Chapter Two

Her dreams that night will fill with visions of horrific fates. Ren and Rey forced to fight against each other, light sabers clashing, and Armitage, oh gods, Armitage with a blaster to Sloan's head. She saw herself on a plateau, high above. Lyric felt anger, fear, and denial all build deep within her until it burst forth like a spring thunderstorm. Rage blew through her like a desert wind, and there was devastation in her wake.

She awoke to breasts that were so full they hurt, and a familiar soreness between her thighs that she'd forgotten how much she enjoyed. Bella appeared about five minutes later with her son for his breakfast. Armitage was gone, but her wedding rings were on her finger again. He'd made quite a production of putting them on her. Then she'd put his collar on him, and the memory of that made sparks in her crotch again. While she still had doubts about his fidelity, she was certainly willing to brand him and mark him as hers.

Sloan finished nursing, and after burping, she played with him as Bella chose an outfit for him to meet the base and other First Order officials in his first outing as Sloan Bey Hux, son of Lord Armitage Hux, Field Marshall of the Combined Galactic Forces of the First Order. Lyric still rolled her eyes at the pontificating the Inner Core planets insisted needed to be added to every occasion. But the old Imperial ways die hard in this section of the galaxy, and the two leaders of the New Order, and their families, were expected to add a little of the old formalities to their actions.

Lyric thought this was all a large crop of bantha shit, considering the galaxy never let Armitage forget what he was until Snoke was killed and he and Ren took control of their own destinies. Life could be as brutal for a bastard as for a child prodigy with a mad mother. This whole day was her gift to him, so to speak. He knew she hated the games that came along with power but was putting his career ahead of her own likes and dislikes, to show off their child as required.

Her heart softened a little when she looked at her beautiful son. She had no problems showing him off, as she was extremely proud of him. But today would be a day that would stretch her acting abilities, given some of the people she knew were invited.

The peace negotiations were to begin later in the week, and her cousin was in town along with some of his Resistance comrades, and that asshole Kez Marab. Why Poe had been stupid enough to bring Marab right to the heart of the New Order, she didn't know. Nor did she want to know. Running away with Marab had been a bad idea, right from the beginning, and she had no intention of ruining her son's life for a bad idea.

Worse, she didn't know if Armitage knew that Poe had brought Marab into his line of sight. She was torn between not telling her husband and earning his wrath if he discovered she knew and
didn't tell him or telling him and watching her ex-lover die in several horrible ways. As Bella dressed the baby, she pulled her own dress from the closet, trying to imagine herself wearing the navy-blue suit dress, covered in blood, either hers or Marab's.

Sloan was in navy as well, a miniature uniform with a white shirt which Lyric gave ten minutes before it would be wrinkled, damp, and/or thrown up on. They were attempting to comb his unruly baby curls when Armitage swept into the room to see what the hold-up might be. Bella grabbed Sloan and scooted out to grab a few last-minute items, leaving husband and wife alone.

"You look beautiful," he promised her. "The most beautiful woman in the galaxy, still."

"You're biased." She laughed at his unamused face.

"True, but several magazines have proclaimed it as well, so I think I'm safe."

She nibbled on the inside of her lip. "Armitage, I heard the most distressing rumor the other day, and I wondered if there were any merit to its news."

"What's that?"

"That Kez Marab is on Coruscant, with my cousin, under Poe's immunity."

Hux's face grew exceptionally white, and apart from the flair of his nostrils, she might have thought him a statue. She wasn't sure if she should stop talking or not, so she went ahead with her point, while she still could.

"I didn't ask for him to come. I haven't talked to any of them, including Poe, since Sloan's birth. Please do not think I care one way or the other what happens to Kez Marab. Poe on the other hand, I care about very much, but not enough to go behind your back."

His eyes met hers, and she nodded once, waiting for him to acknowledge she was doing the right thing. There had been a time when she'd needed Marab, and they all three knew why. But she'd left the smuggler, shut the door on the might have been, and went back to her forever. While she might not yet trust everything Armitage said or did, she would always tell him everything.

Hux answered slowly. "I will not do anything to violate the spirit of the accords, nor do I believe Poe will either. However, if Marab sticks one toe out of line, I will not hesitate to space his ass. Do you understand me, Lyric?"

She looked at him straight on, no shadows or doubts in her eyes or body. "I feel nothing for Kez Marab. You are my husband, to you I owe my allegiance. You are my lord, sir."

His smile was gold to her bruised heart. "And you are mine."

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The crowds seemed unending, and Hux was past ready to end this production. Sloan was getting grumpy, and only a few people who meant anything were left to be introduced. Luckily the more stalwart Imperialists were satisfied with his progeny, and the general mood going into the negotiations seemed to be favorable.

Many of his father's former associates had been highly impressed, both with his position of power within the First Order, and with his family. Gone were the snide comments of Lyric's Resistance associations, and more than one old Imperialist had actually complimented him on her grace and dignity. The support of the wealthy and powerful of the Inner Rim planets to his and Ren's rule
would go far toward seeing their dreams realized.

He felt Lyric stiffen and drew his wandering attention back to the room. One glance at her face and he knew exactly what was wrong. The Resistance delegation entered the ball room, and it was apparent Dameron wasn't happy either. The source of his unhappiness, surprise surprise, was none other than Hux's recurring nightmare.

Kez Marab. Dressed as an officer in the Resistance.

The little shit actually had the nerve to show his face here, in front of him. He stole another look at his wife's face, which was a mask of professionalism. He motioned for an aide.

"Yes, Field Marshall?"

"Keep an eye on that group. If anyone steps one toe out of line, I want them all detained, understand?"

"Yes, Field Marshall."

Lyric raised an eyebrow at his instructions. "Detained?"

"If Poe is innocent of anything, he will be free to go. Marab on the other hand, will not be allowed to wander around Coruscant unattended. Not while you and Sloan are on world. He knows your father, and I don't trust any of his motives."

"Neither do I," she muttered under her breath.

When Poe emerged from the receiving line, Lyric stood and went to hug her cousin. Storm troopers along the wall stepped forward, until Hux raised his hand to stop them. She threw one arm around Dameron's neck, and after an okay from Hux, Dameron hugged her in return.

"Oh Bunny," he whispered, "you look wonderful."

"I feel wonderful Buddy. You're here and you get to meet my son. Nothing can mar this day."

"I hope you still feel that way in about ten seconds."

Lyric looked up into the stormy grey eyes of Kez Marab. Her face slammed close and she turned her back to the smuggler and re-addressed her cousin.

"Please have dinner with me tonight?"

Hux answered the Resistance pilot's unspoken question. "I have a council meeting I cannot avoid, and Lyric wants to spend some quiet time with you. One on one. My people will escort you to our apartments tonight at nineteen hundred."

"Thank you Hux, I appreciate time with Lyric."

"Just to be clear Dameron, the invitation is for you only."

"Duly noted sir." Poe and Hux locked eyes, each understanding the other. Lyric was to be kept from Marab at all costs. Now he knew he could count on Dameron to keep that promise.

He saw Marab take a step toward Lyric, and his instincts honed in to listen to their conversation. Hux could feel his wife's distress, but needed Marab to dig the hole first, so Hux could bury him within it.
"Lyric." The smile on his lips was open, unguarded.

"My name is Lady Bey-Hux, or Lady Hux."

"You look stunning. I heard about the problems with the delivery. I've been worried about you."

"Why would you do that Lt. Marab? You made your position known from the beginning. As I said, we both got what we wanted out of our transaction."

"Lyric, you know you were more than a transaction. A lot more."

"Is there a reason you're here, Kez? Because I don't believe you're here to support peace in the galaxy. Peace doesn't benefit you, and we both know you only do what benefits you."

His smile terrified her. "I'm here to rectify a mistake."

She laughed firmly, "Only one? I'm sure you've made so many along the way."

Marab's face moved closer to his wife, and Hux strained to hear what the asshole had to temerity to say while surrounded by the enemy. Marab's eyes were soft, and his body curved toward Lyric's in a dominating, protective manner that raised Hux's blood pressure about fifty points. As the scum placed a hand on her arm, Hux heard every word.

"I'm here, because I never should have let you leave that day. I'm here, because I fight for what I want, and what I want, pretty lady – is you."

With a light kiss to Lyric's hand, Marab disappeared into the crowd as Hux pulled his wife to his side.

"Don't worry," he promised her. "He'll never get close enough to touch you again."

Hux motioned to Phasma to start moving everyone out the door. This reception was over. Taking Sloan to give Lyric's arms a break, they began walking toward their private apartments, arm in arm. Once alone, he gave Sloan to the nursemaid while he devoted his attention to his wife.

She was exhausted but refused to give in to her own needs without talking with him first, to gauge his reaction to the affair. While he changed from dress uniform to daily for his upcoming duty shift, she removed her clothes, pulling on a long black sweater dress, split up both sides to the waist, and a pair of dark grey tights. Then she grabbed her hair brush and sat crossed legged on the bed as he went to his desk to check messages before departing.

"Will you be here for dinner?" He heard the underlying question in her voice and moved quickly to reassure her insecurities. She still didn't trust him, especially when it came to being away from her. Not that he hadn't earned that distrust, it still hurt every time she questioned him.

"Yes, I have a meeting with the accounting department about the new star destroyer budgets, then a quick one with Ren about an issue in the Outer Rim. I'll be a few hours at the most."

Her look was hooded, and he wanted to know where she was. "What's wrong, my love?"

"Why would Marab come here?"

He snorted a laugh, then looked at the astonishment on her face. "I forget you don't know how beautiful you are."

Lyric rolled her eyes. "There are plenty of beautiful women in the galaxy. Why would Marab risk
his life to try and destroy mine?"

"You really don't get it, do you?"

"What?"

"How incredibly desirable you are." He turned around and took the brush from her hands. "Even when you were in a bacta tank I had to issue orders for men to stop making reasons to visit sick-bay."

"But I'm married, to you, and have no intention of running off with a smuggler."

"Some men would see that as a challenge."

"Men like Marab?"

Hux sighed, then took his wife's hand and pulled her into the circle of his arms. "He managed to get you to say yes once. Now he's taking it as a personal challenge to put himself in between us. We can't let him. We aren't the people we were half a year ago."

"I'm sorry, again, for running off like that. I was just so angry. I didn't know how sick I was and I made poor decisions."

"I made it impossible for you to not run away. I take full responsibility for allowing the situation with Marab to happen, due to poor communication between us both. But I will not allow him to get near you again. Nor are you to seek him out, do you understand?"

Lyric's eyes were resolute. "I have no more need for Kez Marab."
Chapter Summary

Kez investigates ways to see Lyric.

Chapter Three

Marab wandered around the First Order base, looking for one of his former connections, a sergeant in the supply depot. Some days his legitimate identity as a First Order Intelligence officer paid in bonuses other than mere credits. There was a thriving black market which Marab used for his own personal wealth expansion. Resistance, First Order, so long as there was a conflict, he'd find a way to exploit it for his own purposes.

That purpose right now was finding a way to Lyric Bey-Hux without going through hundreds of troopers and one psychotic husband who tended to shoot first then ask questions later. Right now, he was chasing down a lead that suggested the Imperial palace where they lived was riddled with secret passages. If so, it would make his plans immensely easier.

Marab was under no illusion she would come to him willingly. She'd told him she would never leave Hux because of their son. Fine, if she wanted to stay with Hux, there was no reason they couldn't continue their affair behind the red-headed bastard's back. She just needed to trust him, and they could make this work.

After loitering near a certain bar, Marab spotted the object of his pursuit weaving his way back toward the barracks.

"Sergeant Tolland?"

The man peered into the gloomy night. "Marab?"

"Not so loud, that name has a lot of heat attached right now."

"Yeah no shit. My profits took a huge hit after you decided to run away with the Field Marshall's wife. What the hell are you doing here now? Word on the streets is Hux has issued a shoot first order with your name on it." The older man was a veteran of the Imperial days and had kept his head by staying well under higher command's radar.

Scratching his head, Marab at least had the honor to look embarrassed. "Yeah, I made a mistake and I'm looking to rectify it. How much do you know about the Imperial Palace?"

"Other than it garrisons two entire battalions of death trooper who've been using your picture for target practice? Not much."

"Funny, Tollard, very funny. No, I heard a rumor the place is full of secret passageways, escape tunnels from the days of the Emperors. Any truth?"

The old sergeant shook his head. "You so bound and determined to die young boy?"
"Please?"

"Never thought I'd live to see the day Kez Marab would think with his dick before his wallet."

"Yeah, well. You don't know the lady involved."

"Oh, I do. Because I do, I ain't got no interest in helping you break up a happy marriage. Life's been pretty good recently since those two gits stepped from behind Snoke's ass and took over the First Order, and their wives are a big reason for the improvement."

"But what if she wasn't happy? You'd be helping free her from that piece of shit."

Tollard spit onto the dirt beside the walkway. "Let me tell you something you don't know, boy. I know Lady Hux. I've stopped her from climbing trees when she was seven months pregnant, and I saw her back when we first pulled her from the wreckage of Yavin. Those two have been through life, and death, and life again together. Leave her alone. She's already traveled through hell. She don't need your brand of chaos."

"I appreciate your concern Tollard, and I swear, if she doesn't want me, I'll back off. But I think she's just with him because he's all she knows. She met him when she was sixteen fucking years old. She should know someone else in the galaxy would fight for her." Marab knew he was doing a piss poor job of explaining, but it didn't always make sense in his own head either. "She's a wounded bird and needs to know she has the whole galaxy in which to soar, should she want."

The older man wobbled back and forth for a long moment. Just as Marab was about to give up, he smacked the smuggler on the arm, pulling him along in his wake. "I've heard about these tunnels. Never been in them myself, but I know a guy...."

Marab smiled. Things were finally going his way.

*****

Ren was alone in his office when Hux arrived. It seemed odd to see the lanky young man crammed behind a small steel desk with nothing on it except stacks of request holos and reports. Rey was in a chair when he arrived but dismissed herself after giving Hux a quick kiss on the cheek and a promise to come visit the baby soon. Hux stood before the desk waiting for Ren to acknowledge him.

"Sit Armitage, this is a meeting, not an inquisition."

"Sorry Ren, it's been a shit-filled afternoon."

"So I hear. Dameron had the balls to bring Marab right to her face."

Hux stared at the ceiling. "I hate that you can hear my wife's thoughts and I can't. Doesn't exactly give me a level playing field with you."

That brought an actual laugh. "Armitage, you've never had a level field with me. But I think we've moved past that for the most part. Now, tell me about Marab."

"What's to say? He might as well have tried to fuck her right before my eyes. I've got people on him round the clock. If he comes within half a kilometer of Lyric, I'll know it."

"Do you think he knows how to find her so-called father?"
"Probably. What's this about, Ren?"

"Rey just brought me some reports from the Outer Rim. A group of fanatics calling themselves Followers of the True Jedi are making noise on some of the planets out there, including Serenno. While they are small, they are loud and need to be crushed before they can make any rumbles here. Unfortunately, I can't send Rey out there to infiltrate and take them out, so we need another plan."

"What's wrong with using the Jedi?"

The Supreme Leader actually blushed like a teenager. "We're going to have a baby. I'm taking her off active duty until further notice."

Hux had to smile at that. "I have the feeling she's going to enjoy forced retirement about as much as Lyric did. Good luck."

"Yeah, well I have the feeling you're right but after witnessing what happened with Lyric, she's willing to be protected and sheltered more than I anticipated. Which brings us back to the central issue. What do we do about these extremists?"

"They know we're stretched right now. We're months away from our new star destroyers coming on line, and manpower numbers are still low but rising each month. Do we dare risk sending an incursion during peace talks?"

"Do we really have a choice?"

"I'll get with Phasma, have her coordinate the operation."

"Hux, be sure to let her know if anything comes up about Jeof Dooku, I'm to be notified at once. They aren't to try and tackle any Force users by themselves. We don't need a bloodbath."

"Agreed."

"How is Lyric doing, by the way?"

"Much better. Her blood pressure has been holding steady for weeks now, and the doctors are very encouraged. And Sloan is amazing, growing like crazy."

"I have to confess Armitage, seeing you be successful as a father gives me hope."

"Which brings us back to Marab. I want him dead, Ren. I want to strangle him with my bare hands, just like with Piccus, so I can watch the life drain out of his eyes."

"First we need our peace deal. Then you can have Marab to do with as you like."

With Ren's promise in his ears, Hux made his way to Lyric.

*****

When he arrived home, there was mild chaos running through his household, owing to the upcoming arrival of a member of the Resistance for dinner. Hux locked his office up tight, dismissed certain staff for the evening, giving paid time off to keep them from being tempted by the handsome pilot's charm. Then while Bella took charge of Sloan's preparations, Hux went to join his wife in their bedroom.

Lyric was in the shower when he entered, music playing softly in the background. Without a sound, he quickly stripped and tiptoed into the bathroom to join her. He opened the door and
stopped to study her. Her face was lifted up to the water, eyes closed, and the rainy stream fell
down her throat then washed down her breasts and dripped from her nipples. Her hands rubbed
circles on her stomach and lower as he felt himself grow at the sight.

He moved into the shower and slid his arms around her waist. Lyric opened her eyes in surprise
then smiled in happiness.

"You're home early. I thought I'd be through before you got here."

With a wicked grin, he slid his hand between her thighs, rubbing his thumb in circles around her
swollen clit. "Through with what? You little loth-cat, were you trying to come without me?"

She shook her head as she leaned back against his chest. "Never, I would never do such a thing."

"I hope not, I'd hate to have to punish you." He stopped his thumb, smiling at her whine of self-
pity. She tried to pull his hands back to her, but he held her firmly around the waist, the frustration
of her need causing her to make interesting chuff noises. He looked at her with that half-amused
look he did so well.

Her long slender fingers sought out his cock, and it was all he could do to not moan out loud as she
wrapped those fingers around his shaft and began to tease the iron under the soft velvet skin. With
a growl he pulled her into his arms, her legs locking around his waist as he slid inside her warmth.

"Whatever am I going to do with you?" He murmured into her ear as he backed her against the
shower wall and began to thrust steadily into her.

She threw her head back and moaned loudly as he used his fingers to tease her clit to a frenzied
zing. As she clamped around him, he backed down to keep from accidental shooting inside her.
Even with the implant, he wasn't ready to take chances now that her health seemed on a positive
trend.

Pulling from her, his cock shot hot ropes of come on the tile wall below her butt, as they panted
together. Still holding her locked around his waist, he shoved them back under the water, kissing
her deeply as the warmth of the steady rainfall wrapped around them and the rest of the galaxy
disappeared. Hux broke the kiss, only to grab the shampoo and begin washing her silky tresses.

"Thank you."

He laughed, "Whatever for?"

"Everything."

"That's a broad topic."

"Did you ever stop to think what might have happened if I hadn't reached you through the Force
that day above Yavim? I would have died."

"I try not to think about it."

"I can't forget about it."

He took the soap and scrubbed her back, trying to distract whatever line of thinking had her feeling
so sad. The doctors had warned him about the hormonal changes as her body readjusted post-
pregnancy, but he'd not noticed her prone to the emotional excesses that had ruled her before
delivery.
"Now that I feel better, do you think we should do the female contraceptives?"

"How do you feel about it?"

"Willing to try your ninety-two percent for a little while."

"Really?"

"Really."

"How quickly can you get rid of your cousin?"

Her laugh was loud and happy. "Behave yourself."

"Speak for yourself, love."

She stepped from the shower, wrapping a towel around her body as her long legs danced out of the shower and toward her dressing room. "I promise to behave if you promise to be nice."

"Some things are impossible," he muttered to the shower wall.

"I heard that!"
Poe and Lyric finally get to spend family time together.

Poe Dameron waited in the front hall where the Storm troopers who'd picked him up from the hotel deposited him with strict instructions to wait where he was. The apartment was decorated in that high Imperial style that always made him roll his eyes. The gold and precious jewels used as decorations could feed a small system for a year. He had a hard time picturing Lyric ever gracing this room. It didn't suit anything he knew about his cousin.

Then a butler led him up a set of stairs, to where the family really lived. Up here, chaos reigned. In the central family room, there were baby towels and toy animals strewn everywhere. Sloan could be heard loudly vocalizing from the kitchen, where he was introduced to Armitage Hux's older sister Bella, who had dinner duty with her nephew. Poe laughed as he removed a large glob of cereal from Bella Hux's red hair, compliments on Sloan. Both laughed at the boisterous three-month old, and Poe helped dress his newest family member for dinner.

The small family dining room reminded him of home when they were children. Lyric set a family-style table, where the plates were passed and she spooned out the dishes for everyone. It was Lyric, Poe, and Bella who was also entertaining Sloan. Nothing formal or pretentious. Dameron though how normal the entire place seemed to be. No Storm troopers lurking in the halls, or dark Jedi reading minds.

Lyric wore a long black sweater with an open neckline, along with grey tights and black low-heeled boots. Her hair was in a ponytail, and she wore no make-up. Her neck was bare, but her arms were noticeable for the matching black and amber cuffs on each arm. He also noticed her wedding rings were on again. She looked simply stunning, and Poe could not believe she was barely twenty-one.

Once dinner was served, they talked about nothing of any importance. Who was where, who Poe was dating, whatever happened to Finn, before they turned to reminiscing. Poe held his new cousin for the first time as they waited for dessert.

"I gotta admit Bunny, you do good work. He's beautiful."

"Thanks Poe. I'm so glad he doesn't have my eyes and Armitage's red hair. That would be a horrible combination."

"If he were your child, there's no way he'd be horrible. Besides, you always love your own child."

"Ciara never loved me. She only loved that she could hurt me."

Poe reached out and took Lyric's hand. "Hey, Ciara was a tormented woman. She tried, and that's all anyone can do. In the long run, she left you with us, and that was the best thing she could have
"I know," Lyric smiled. "But my children will have normal parents. No monsters for my son."

"Has Hux or Ren heard anything?"

"Not recently. Not that they would tell me, of course, but even the servants have heard nothing. But he's out there somewhere. I can feel it in the back of my mind. A pressure building that I can't get rid of."

They spend another hour with the baby, talking about their own childhoods, before Bella took Sloan to bed. Then she took Poe for a walk through the gardens, under the glass dome which protected them from excessive rain.

She held his arm and they walked in silence for a while. He stole glances at her profile and noticed how happy and content she seemed. Not at all unhappy, as Marab led him to believe.

"Why did you call Kez to run away before Sloan was born?"

They walked several more lengths into the garden before she sat at a bench and looked up at him.

"I was hurting, physically and emotionally, and soul-sick. I needed someone willing to risk Armitage's wrath, and the fact he found me beautiful was only icing on the cake."

"Kez thinks you're in love with him and ready to walk away from Hux for good."

Lyric rolled her eyes and huffed loudly. "I never gave him any illusions about what I wanted other than a quick fuck and a ride off Arkanis. Any relationship is pure imagination on his part."

"What happened between you two?"

"A huge mistake."

When Poe raised one eyebrow at her, she expanded. "I needed Mr. Right Now, and Kez thought he would audition for Mr. Forever. I threw it back at him and left him alone in the Outer Rim."

Poe ran his hand through his hair and grimaced at the ceiling. "Shit Lyric, of all the people you could have had a casual affair with, you had to choose one of the more dangerous. I've known Kez a long time, and I've never seen him about anyone the way he is about you."

"What do you mean?"

"Willing to risk taking you right from underneath Hux's nose. You need to watch out for him Lyric, he's a dangerous man."

"Then why did you bring him here!?"

"Because I didn't know! No one told me he was the one you left Hux with, nor that he actually had the balls to tell the truth to your husband. Hux is ready to burn him at the stake in the city square, and for the first time, I want to help him."

Lyric stared at her cousin without making a sound. Then she removed Sloan from Poe's lap and rang a bell from the table beside her. The butler appeared in the doorway.

"Would you let me know when the Field Marshall returns from his meetings?"
"Yes, Lady Hux. He's already called and has left the Supreme Leader's palace. He will be here soon. I'll bring him as soon as he arrives."

"Thank you Willams. Would you also bring us some tea?"

"Right away Lady Hux."

Poe smiled. "Do I need to leave before Hugs arrives home?"

"No, he's fine with you being here. We both however, want Marab to leave the planet as soon as possible."

"You're going to have to be the one to make that happen, Bunny. He won't believe it coming from me. If you truly love Armitage, and I'm convinced more and more you do, then you need to kill whatever it is Marab thinks exists between the two of you, no matter how painful."

"I know. I will, just as soon as I figure out how."

They spent the remainder of their time together discussing the upcoming peace talks. Poe was amazed at the general positive attitude of the delegates to accepting First Order oversight. In return each Inner Rim planet pledged to contribute money and recruits to the central peace keeping forces of the First Order. Lyric was understandably proud of the work the four of them had accomplished, and Poe promised to listen with a fair mind to their ideas for bringing the Resistance into the new government.

Armitage arrived just in time for Sloan to wind up his vocal demand for dinner. Leaving while the getting was good, Poe left after promising to come again soon, and to stay for longer. As he was leaving, he turned to catch Lyric and Hux, arms around each other, eyes locked on their son as Lyric opened her dress to nurse. It reminded him of family, and it was then Poe knew for certain, that Lyric loved Armitage, just as deeply as Shara Bey loved Kes Dameron, so long ago.

He spent the rest of the evening wandering the city, listening to the mood of the people, and learning much to his amazement, that most people welcomed the advancement of the First Order now that Snoke was gone. When he at last returned to his hotel, it was with a heart more filled with questions than he'd left with.

*****

Armitage smiled as Lyric tucked Sloan into his crib for the night. Back in their room, he unzipped the back of her dress as she began undressing for bed.

"Tomorrow starts the official conference. Will you attend the opening ceremonies?"

"If you'd like to me then I will. It's supposed to be a sunny morning."

Hux removed his coat, setting his shoes in the cabinet so the droid would polish them overnight. After changing into sleeping pants, he returned to the bedroom, where Lyric was stretching before bed.

He watched enraptured as she went through the basic forms, her lithe body moving through the motions like water flowing downstream. When she finished, he clapped, making her blush. She looked around for her nightgown, which he had clasped behind his back. Lyric reached behind him, her breasts rubbing against his bare chest.

He pulled her up with his hands under her ass. She giggled at him.
"What are you doing?"

Throwing her down on the bed, he slid his pants to the ground, freeing his half-hard cock. "I've been thinking about fucking you all night."

"That's all you think about most of the time," she groused.

"True," he agreed. "But today is a special night."

"Why?"

He joined her on the bed, kneeling between her thighs, ready to taste her. "It's been a year ago today we found out you were pregnant with Sloan."

He slid his teeth to her clit, seizing it between them as he pressed lightly with his tongue, feeling the buck of her hips from the zing. Then he slipped inside deep with two fingers and wiggled to find that special spot that drove her wild. She pulled on his hair, grinding herself on his face in an attempt to get more. Sucking her clit into his teeth, she cried out his name as she shook and bucked in response to his mouth.

While she floated back to the earth, Hux moved up the bed and slid into the slickness of her core, groaning loudly with satisfaction. He pulled her legs up so her knees were at her shoulders, opening her up and putting his shaft at the perfect angle to hit each time he slid back inside.

"Oh gods," she moaned, "don't you dare stop now."

"Don't worry," he assured her "I promised you'd walk funny, and I meant it."

Each thrust felt deeper and deeper until he felt their bodies merge into one complete union of pleasure. Her tight warmth pulled him into her depths and when they came together, both shuddered and clenched into each other. It felt like hours later when he softened enough to pull out. She snuggled against his chest, rubbing her crotch against his hip bone as if she needed more from him now. He chuckled and used one hand to massage her clit to a mini-climax. He took his cum as it dripped from her cunt and smeared it around her clit and nipples. Lyric sighed in happiness.

Pulling her into his arms, his lips met hers, his tongue parting them to spar with her own. Her hands wandered around his body, and each stroke felt like flame caressing his skin. He rolled to his back, letting her lay across him like a pillow. His hands drew languid circles down her back to her ass. For a long moment, they lay still in time, willful in their disregard for schedules or meetings.

She chuckled when his cock began to grow underneath her ass, rising up slightly to allow him to slip inside again. Her hips were stronger than the last time, and he lay back and let her drive her own pleasure. She sat, allowing herself to slide all the way down his cock, taking him deep.

Her eyes met his, and he raised his eyebrows, wondering what she intended next.

She chuckled when his cock began to grow underneath her ass, rising up slightly to allow him to slip inside again. Her hips were stronger than the last time, and he lay back and let her drive her own pleasure. She sat, allowing herself to slide all the way down his cock, taking him deep.

Her left hand snaked around behind her and grabbed his balls, the nails running lightly along the seam of his sac. Then she raised up and slid back down again as she squeezed with her nails. Hux felt the electric pulse from her fingers all the way from the base of his spine up. She continued fucking herself upon him as he watched the rapture on her face with every movement.

Lyric's eyes were gleaming, and after a moment, he could stand it no longer. Grabbing her shoulders and pulling her tight, he wrapped one leg around hers and rolled them over. As soon as he confirmed she was comfortable, Hux took over, staying with her deep, slow thrusts, pulling her legs around his waist as he levered deeper each time.
He placed his mouth on her nipples, biting back and forth between both until the sensitivity drove her senseless and the clamp down on his cock drove rational thoughts from his mind. Her body shuddered as convulsions rocked her over and over again, and Hux felt her ecstasy as deeply as his own. It was as though he were feeling her orgasm on top of his.

When he slid from inside her, they lay entwined in each other's arms, listening to the sounds of their heartbeats. His cock was overly sensitive but he didn't stop her when Lyric gently pulled it into her hand. He kissed her forehead, laughing to discover it was just as sweaty as his own.

"I need five minutes," he confessed. "I'm not as young as you."

"No, but I have more miles I bet," she countered. "Besides, I'm already going to be sore tomorrow. Shall we just sleep for five minutes, please sir?"

"Since you asked so nicely, I agree. But first, sit up for a moment."

He pulled a box from the table on his side of the bed. "I had your collar re-worked to be fingerprint activated, like mine. Only this one works with my fingerprints, so only I can remove it."

The black titanium and gold collar felt cool against her heated skin, but the biggest surprise came from the amber pendant. As soon as it touched her, she felt as if someone else were inside her head. It wasn't that dangerous, painful connection that happened before. This felt like someone had snapped a missing circuit together, and all her systems were running at maximum efficiency.

She pulled his mouth close, and kissed him slowly, taking her time to try and convey all her love with that one kiss. He moaned against her, and she was washed with a sense of need, and acceptance. For one long perfect moment, they held each other against the rest of the galaxy. Then Hux's datapad beeped.

Anger and resentment slapped Lyric across the head and she tried to figure out where these new emotions were stemming, as she knew they weren't hers.

"Hux," he growled into the microphone.

"Pardon the interruption Field Marshall, but the target you provided earlier is on the move."

"Monitor and email me updates." He slammed shut the link.

"Armitage, do me a favor?"

"What's that?"

"Think about something funny."

"What?"

"Just, please? I want to test something."

He looked at her and smiled broadly. Laughter washed over her senses and burst from her without notice. The look on Armitage's face was priceless.

"Where did the crystals come from?" She narrowed her eyes in suspicion.

"I asked Ren because I wanted to match your eyes."

"That asshole, he gave you Kyber crystals."
"Lyric, I'm tired, and I'm not Force sensitive, what the hell are you talking about?"

"Kyber crystals are what Jedi power their light sabers with, and these are apparently amber Kybers."

"What does that mean?"

She leaned against his chest, "Kyber crystals all start as white, and take on their color from the meditations of the Jedi who is building with them. Ren's crystal is red and cracked, which is what gives it that shudder, he's studied the Dark side of the Force. When Rey used Anakin Skywalker's saber, the crystal was blue, the color of a Jedi guard. Luke's was green, someone who prefers the mental side of the Force. I noticed with these, as I've worn them, the amber deepens. See – look at the four different crystals?"

"These three in the original jewelry are almost identical now in tone, and yours has a distinctive tint that wasn't there before. Even though you aren't Force sensitive, I'm starting to pick up on your emotions by the touch I've imbued into your stone. You were angry when the comms beeped in, and I felt that as if it were my own. I wonder if it goes both ways?"

Her eyes drilled into his as she thought about the most precious image she had of her husband and projected it toward him, not too loudly, as she didn't need Ren and/or Rey seeing what she broadcast.

It was an image she'd kept a long time, from a night floating in the bacta tank that her mind half believed never happened. Armitage sat in a chair staring at her floating body as she twisted and twirled through recuperation. His face was naked of all pretenses, stripped down to the pain he'd held inside day after day as doctors hedged their bets on her survival.

The light changed in Armitage's eyes, and wonder dawned on his face. "What the hell?"

"I can send you images through the amber crystal on your collar. If only I could have known about this before. I can't get images from you, only emotions, but still, this is amazing."

He pulled her tight and nibbled along her shoulder. "Do it again."

By the time the sun rose for the first day of peace talks, neither had slept more than a few hours, and Hux had made good on his promise to make his wife walk funny. Both of them wore rather blissed out smiles during the morning speeches.
Chapter Summary

Lyric has some uncomfortable conversations.

Chapter Five

Marab's seat for the opening session was off to the left of the main podium, which blocked his view of Armitage and Lyric Hux. So he worked his way around the room until he could see them together. The last time they'd interacted around him was the day he'd taken her right off of Coruscant during the welcoming parade. Back then Hux treated his wife like a cracked porcelain doll, as she had been. Now, almost a year later, Marab had to confess she looked magnificent.

She was in a black dress, buttoned at the bodice and form-fitted to the hips. The skirt dropped to her ankles but was slit on each side to mid-thigh. Her legs were covered with black silk stockings and she wore knee-height black riding boots. Her hair was loose but gathered behind her ears and around her neck hung what Marab assumed was Hux's mark. When he looked at her face, she was listening intently to whatever her husband was saying to their table.

He studied her, comparing her to the crazed, damaged, abandoned woman who'd caught his heart back on Arkanis. Even though she was no longer pregnant, she shown like the fucking sun in the midst of all the First Order black. She'd gained some weight on her own, which was good because the hollows of her cheeks were filling out. Everything about her bespoke of Hux's love and care of her, and it was killing him.

He remembered the way her hair smelled like lavender and something muskier that he'd never associated with anyone other than her. Then he thought about how she'd writhed beneath him as she came in wave after wave of pleasure. No other woman would ever come close to meaning to him what Lyric did. And he hated himself for that.

Marab couldn't believe he was actually rooting for the sadistic asshole to fuck up his own marriage. Especially when he realized what pain that would cause the woman he loved. And when he saw the nursemaid catch Lyric's attention, he moved to intercept her before she could leave and be beyond his reach.

Then he saw her reach for something from the nurse, and he came face to face with her son, the son whose unborn presence once kept him from stealing her away from everything. He saw the love on her face as she nuzzled her son's head, and Hux's laugh as he swatted his wife's ass. Saw their eyes meet and read the blush of her face and realized the truth.

Lyric loved her husband, and son. He was too late.

*****

Poe finally located Marab at a bar in the hotel, rapidly drinking himself into a stupor.

"Geez Marab, you've got to stop doing this to yourself. She's not the only woman in the galaxy.
"Easy for you to say, Dameron. You've never been in love. Lyric is everything I've ever wanted in a woman, and she's in love with fucking Armitage Hux? Where's the justice in that?"

"If you'd shut up and listen, I may have a way for you to talk with her alone. It would only be for a few minutes, but I can get her to agree to that. But you have to be sober, and logical, when you meet with her. Don't crowd her, don't push her, just say what you want to say and then walk away."

"I'll take whatever I can get, you know that."

"All right, meet me tomorrow after the closing session. Lyric is hosting the delegates for a reception at the ballet which will be attended by all except Field Marshall Hux and the Supreme Leader. After the closing session, there will be a fifteen-minute window between Hux leaving with Kylo Ren and Lyric's driver arriving. I intend to spend at least five minutes with my cousin and her baby, and I will give you five."

Poe grabbed Marab by the collar and hissed into his face. "Make it fucking count."

*****

Lyric arrived at the peace talks on the second day alone, Hux having already departed with Ren. When they arrived at the conference center, there were several people asking her for autographs and when she finally got inside, the doors were shut for the first speakers. Not wishing to interrupt the proceedings, she found a small office and began working on some paperwork from the household accounts.

"My lady," Captain Phasma soon stuck her head into Lyric's private corner. "The Field Marshall wants to know that you are alright."

"Yes, thank you Phasma. Please let my husband know I'll join him between speeches."

"Why were you running late, my lady?"

Lyric blushed, "I had to spend some extra time this morning leaving milk for the baby. Which reminds me, can you make sure I'm open right after the sessions before the ballet to pump again? The courier will be here to make sure it gets back to the apartments in time."

"You already promised to spend a few minutes with Poe Dameron between events."

"Poe won't mind, he's my cousin."

Phasma's mouth turned down at the corners, a sign she was unhappy about something. "As you say, my lady. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to report to the Field Marshall."

She finished her budgets, and filed them with the appropriate departments, then sent a quick message to Bella asking for pictures of the baby. This was her first full day out and about without feeding Sloan herself somewhere throughout the day, and she missed his sweet face more than she thought possible. How would she ever make it until late evening when the ballet event was done?

Without thinking about it, she began to play with the amber Kyber crystal on her collar. A wave of boredom and amusement washed over her; Hux wasn't enjoying the speeches very much without her there to distract him and her relationship with their crystals was bringing his emotions through the bond to her. She sent him back a vision of what they could be doing if they weren't locked into these talks. The change in his emotion hit her immediately, a wave of desire and need so hard she
almost rubbed her clit to release the pressure.

Unfortunately, she sent him that image as well, and a quick blast of anger hit her. How dare she try and circumvent his rules just because she was locked in an empty office? But Lyric was still filled with hormones, and the back and forth with Hux was driving her wild. She unbuttoned the front of her dress, just enough to feel cool air on her overheated chest. She leaned back in the chair and slid her hands down the front of her dress, pausing slightly before pulling the hem up higher and higher.

His anger was growing, and she was lost in the freedom and revelry of the moment. It only took a few swipes at her swollen nub, and she fell apart, fist jammed in her mouth so no one would hear her outside the walls. Breathing heavily, she stared at the ceiling high above her and let the mellowness of her mood float her gently back to reality. In the distance she heard clapping, and realized it was time for the break.

Lyric stood up and smoothed her dress down, making sure she looked presentable. As she turned to the door, Hux burst through, his ice blue eyes streaming a mixture of anger and need at her.

"How dare you pleasure yourself in a room where anyone could have walked in?"

He crossed the room in three quick strides, opening his pants to free himself as he did. He pulled Lyric into his arms and pulled her dress up to her waist, then he ripped her underpants off with one hand. Bending her over the desk she'd been working at only minutes previous, he slid into her with little warning.

"I would have known your secret even if you hadn't included me in your little peep show. I could smell you the moment I walked into the room. What am I to do with such a naughty wife." He rolled the last word on his tongue as he rammed his cock deeper and deeper. "However shall I teach her anything?"

With two more deep strokes, Hux came so hard he thought he'd pulled a muscle in his back. Then as Lyric built toward her own plateau, he pulled out and chuckled at her. She gasped at him, eyes wide open and disbelieving.

"Are you just going to leave me there?" The anger underneath her tone was amusing.

"You already got yours, remember? Now, let's go have lunch with these assholes and get ready for the afternoon sessions. Oh, and Lyric?"

"Yes, sir?"

Hux grinned in a nasty, teasing, sneer. "Don't you dare try to come again before we see each other in private again. That will be late tonight, so keep an eye on where those hands are at all time. If you try to sneak in another one, I'll just make you wait that much longer."

Her eyes glowed with simmering heat. "I bet you will."

The remainder of the afternoon was spent smiling at the crowds and mentally torturing each other until she was afraid people knew what was going on. She was certain Ren know, as occasionally he would make a choking sound and look at Lyric with a strangled look in his eyes. Once, she winked at him, and watched his face go from pale to fire red in one breath. Served him right, she thought, for giving Hux Kyber crystals. But she did make an effort to narrow her thoughts after that.

As soon as the last speaker finished, the Supreme Leader and the Field Marshall left together, destination unknown. The delegates were joining Lyric as hostess for dinner and an evening of
dance. But first, she had to get rid of some milk before she exploded.

Phasma escorted her to the office she'd used previous, then went to fetch Poe. Lyric took the backpack from a trooper and retreated to express breast milk while waiting for her cousin. When the door opened her back was to it. As she picked up a towel to cover herself, she spun around anticipating Poe Dameron.

Instead, Kez Marab stood motionless, staring at her chest.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Her face flushed beet red and she looked to make sure she was properly hidden under the towel.

"I asked Poe for five of his minutes to talk to you, just us."

"I don't want to talk to you. Especially just us. Where is Poe?"

She tried to pass by to call for him, when Marab grabbed her arm. Eyes wide, she looked at him in panic, and hissed "Don't touch me."

He dropped her arm, spinning away from her, running this fingers through his sandy blonde waves. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I won't touch you, I promise, just please don't run away. I just want to talk to you. Five minutes, that's all."

Realizing she was trapped until she could get rid of him, Lyric sat back down at the desk chair and stared up at Marab. "All right, five minutes. Then I'm screaming rape."

The smile that twisted his face twisted her guts as well. "I guess I would deserve that."

"Yes, Kez you do."

"Lyric, I'm sorry."

"For what? As we've said, we were each pretty clear about our transaction, I don't see why you keep coming back. It was a one-time deal."

"That's before I knew you'd burn yourself on my soul and now I, I can't function without you. I keep looking in the co-pilot seat but it isn't you there and it should be. I know you love your son, and you think you love Hux because he was your first, but you love me too, only you're too fucking stubborn to admit it."

Now that she was letting him talk, Marab decided to dive into the deep end of the pool. "Leave all this Lyric, leave him and come with me. We're good together, and you'd have freedom, real freedom to walk away if I ever hurt you. Bring Sloan, and we'll teach the kid the other side of government. Bring everything, or nothing, but come with me."

Her eyes were closed, briefly she wondered if this blinding headache she was suffering from could be her mind snapping in two. Using every calming technique known, she opened her eyes and leveled them at her unwelcome visitor. Damn Hux for leaving her unsatisfied, it made her decisions harder.

"Kez, I don't know how else to say this, but there is no 'we'. For a brief, chaotic moment in time, you and I did each other a favor. But that moment is gone. Thank you, for everything. You will always hold a special place in my story, but I love Armitage, I love Sloan. They are my family."

"He'll hurt you again, you know that don't you?"
"That is not your concern."

"If he hurts you, it concerns me. I don't want to know you're in pain."

"Then leave. You won't know anything about me in the Outer Rim."

Marab laughed sourly. "I wish that were true. But you're the fourth most important person in the galaxy. Even in nowhere dive bars on backwater planets they've heard of Lyric Bey. There is nowhere in the galaxy I can escape you, pretty lady. Even if I wanted to."

"Why are you here?"

"I told you."

"But you know I'm not going to run away with you. What do you gain by being here?"

He smiled again, and for a moment she almost allowed herself to smile back.

"Lyric, I need you."

"No you don't Kez, you want me. There's a big difference."

As he opened his mouth to rebut, the door opened and Captain Phasma was there with three Storm troopers.

"Lady Hux, is this delegate supposed to be in here?"

"No Captain, I believe he is lost. Would you find someone to escort him wherever he's supposed to be?"

"Certainly, Lady Hux. Are you ready for the ice chest?"

"As soon as I have some privacy, yes."

The Storm troopers grabbed Marab's elbow. "Good-bye Lady Hux. You know how to find me if you need me."

"Good bye, Lt. Marab."

As they pushed him out the door, Lyric heard him call back to her. "I'll be listening."

*****

By the time Lyric returned to their apartments, she was tired, irritable, and in need of feeding her son. She stripped out of the dress she'd had on so long it felt part of her skin. She pulled on Armitage's robe and went through into the nursery to check on Sloan.

"He just woke up," whispered her sister by law. "We had a great evening, much better than yours it would appear. You look like shit, pardon my frankness."

"That damn smuggler managed to get in to talk with me."

Bella stared in horror. "What did he do?"

"He didn't do anything, he just tried to convince me to run away with him again."

"You have to give him points for style."
"No I don't. I didn't ask him come here."

"No," Bella murmured as she handed Sloan to his mother, "but you did take him for a ride that men still talk about. You made him a bit of a legend, small wonder he wants to complete the fairy tale."

Lyric huffed in protest. "It wasn't all that, and if you want to know all the gory details, ask and I'll tell you."

Settling down in the lounge chair, Lyric watched Sloan latch on and begin nursing, then turned her attention to Bella. "Do you want the truth?"

"Lyric, I don't want you to feel you have to tell me anything because Armitage is my brother."

"The truth is, it was odd and uncomfortable being with someone who wasn't Armitage, and I spent the entire time sick and miserable, unaware of how really ill I was. I will concede that the smuggler knows how to kiss. Oh gods could he ever, "but Kez Marab is a shifty, self-centered asshole, who only wants me because I so deeply loathe him."

"Did you tell him you love him?"

"Never! Because I don't. I'd just found out the depths of Armitage's betrayals. I'd have run off with Kylo Ren if he'd offered. But I would never leave Sloan, nor take him from his home and family for a man whose allegiance is to credits, not people."

Bella stared at Lyric for a long time. "Have you forgiven Armitage for his transgressions?"

"I think so. I want to trust him, but I fear being hurt again."

"So does he," Bella whispered. "Confess your fears to him. It may surprise you to find how similar they are to his. Lyric, I didn't like you the first times I met you. I thought you were young and flippant. Then you ran away, and when Armitage told me the truth of what happened, I thought you were one of the bravest people I knew."

"I've watched you and my brother find a way to make things work between you, and I admire you for being willing to let those two use you for their own public relations. Don't give up on him. While he still wants to rule the galaxy, there room now for compassion and love. The old Armitage Hux, the one our father attempted to mold, would have laughed at compassion."

Lyric smiled through tears at her sister by law. "Thank you, Bella. That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me."

"Well," the woman sniffed as she took Sloan and began burping, "don't get too used to it."

They smiled at each other.

Lyric pulled her boots off, then stood up and stretched. "I'm exhausted. Do you mind if I go ahead to bed?"

"Go. You've had a full day."

"Do you know if Armitage is home?"

Bells shook her head. "I haven't seen him."

Passing through the nursery, she emerged into her dressing room. Lyric quickly changed into her nightgown, then headed to bed. The room was cold and empty. She checked her datapad again for
messages. Nothing. It wasn't like him to not call or message. All she could think was he must be madder than she imagined.

Holding the amber pendant, she focused her thoughts on her husband. The image she sent was innocuous, a simple question mark. The emotions she received in return were confusing, thick with various levels of conflicting sensations. But she did manage to understand he would be a while longer before coming home.

Warning bells went off in her mind. His emotions were obviously hiding something from her, and her tattered sense of worth immediately jumped to extremes. He was cheating on her again, that must be what he was hiding.

She closed the door on her thoughts, anger radiating from her in waves of heat and ice. Racing to the living room, she grabbed one of the bottles on the bar and turned it up, taking a big swig. Lyric didn't drink, so she coughed and choked on the fiery mouthful as it burned all the way down. A wave of unfamiliar concern slid over her, as her husband apparently realized something was wrong.

She took another swig, ignoring the burning in her stomach that reminded her of loss and unending stars. And then another. She stared out the picture window in the living room at the city beyond. Once upon a time, she'd been a free, young Bohemian dancer, eating at diners, laughing over shared bottles of wine with friends and other dancers, living each moment as thought it might be her last. Now look at her. What was it Madam Izzerah called her? A pretty cunt in a dress.

When at last she stumbled back to their bedroom, she keyed a lock to the door. If he was going to spurn her, it'd be a cold day in hell before he was welcome in her bed again. He could go sleep in the nursery with his son. She fell into a troubled sleep, wondering if this was her punishment for drinking. As she slept, she curled into a small, fetal ball as the nightmares continued assaulting her one after the other. Tears wet her face, and by the time Phasma managed to get the door open, her screaming had awakened the entire base.
Marab was on base, headed to meet with Sergeant Tollard when he heard the sirens' wail and realized something was wrong. Unfortunately, while in the guise of Lt. Marab, Intelligence officer, there was little he could do but follow the others headed toward the palace. Specifically, it appeared, to Field Marshall Hux's apartments, where apparently someone attacked the Field Marshall's wife. The base was in a lock down, as the attacker was still on the grounds. The Supreme Leader was in charge of apprehending, while troopers would be used to search for accomplices and explosives.

Someone had attacked Lyric? Where had Hux been? Hadn't he sworn to protect her? Marab felt the seething panic in his guts that came whenever he thought she was in danger. He milled around in the back of the comms center, listening to hear what happened. His patience was rewarded when Phasma herself appeared in the room, apparently relaying to the Field Marshall who, surprise, wasn't even on world while his wife was assaulted.

"Hux," he heard over the loudspeaker.

"Phasma here, Field Marshall. The base has been secured and the Supreme Leader is with Lady Hux as we speak. He said he will contact you himself once he's satisfied she's safe."

"What happened Captain? Is my son alright?"

"Sloan and your sister are both fine. Lord Ren said neither of them were targeted, only Lyric."

"Targeted how?"

"The device is an amplifier that increases pain. Somehow this man sent Lyric into a horrific nightmare and then locked her into the pain until she could take it no longer. The scream which woke everyone was her throwing off the stasis and breaking the machine with her voice. We have the fanatic in custody and Lord Ren will be questioning him shortly."

"Excellent. Let Ren know I will be back on planet in three hours and would love to join in the questioning. How is my wife?"

"The Supreme Leader placed her in a Force-sleep while he tries to remove the nightmare. Your son and Bella are fine and in the panic room until we are certain everything is clear."

"Thank you, Phasma. I'll see you in three hours."

"Field Marshall."

The tall, blonde killer turned on her heel and left the center. Marab leaned against the wall, finally able to breathe after finding out the details of the attack. Looking down, he noticed his hands were shaking with rage. Turning on his heel, he left the comms center looking for fresh air.

Once outside his feet took him to the palace against his knowledge. He looked up and saw Kylo Ren emerging from the entrance, a man bound and carried between two of the Knights of Ren. Two more Knights carried a piece of mangled equipment between them. That must be the remains
of the device Lyric destroyed. Obviously, serious Dark forces were after Lyric and he couldn't help but wonder if the Followers of the True Jedi were involved.

As soon as Ren and the Knights left, Marab slipped through the entrance and past several Storm troopers to reach the back staircase. In his First Order officer's uniform, very few had the clearance to stop him, or to even realize he was the one person the Field Marshall had specified by name be denied entrance to his private quarters.

Instead, Marab found himself on the family floor, running down the hallway looking for her. He found her in the baby's room, holding her sleeping son, tears streaming down her face. She was pale, too pale, and he worried she'd faint. There was a fear emanating from her he could taste.

"Lyric, are you alright?" He kept his voice low and calm, not wanting to frighten her any worse than she was.

"Kez? What are you doing here?"

"I was in the comms center and heard Hux tell Phasma he'd be three more hours getting back on planet. I didn't like the idea of you being here alone, not after what happened."

"That's not your concern."

He crossed into the room, putting his arms around her and the sleeping baby. He purposely stared straight at her, avoiding the obstacle between them.

"Lyric, whether it's my concern or not, I worry when you're in danger. I won't bother you, I'll stand in the hall, make sure no one heads this way. I just need to know you're safe."

She stared at him with those cat eyes filled with unshed tears. He wondered what the hell the nightmare had been about to shake her bad enough the Supreme Leader had to be called. She squirmed under his scrutiny, and finally cast her eyes down at her child.

"All right, you can stand in the hall and let me know if anyone heads this way. I don't want to see anyone, other than my husband or my cousin."

He smoothed her hair with his hand, pulling her closer and kissing her gently on the forehead.

"Okay then, I'll be in the hall. Do you want me to leave the door open, or closed?"

She bit her lip. "Closed for now. Once I know Sloan is good and asleep, I'll open it and stay close by."

He smiled at her. "Okay then."

Taking his time, keeping his movements calm and unhurried, Marab tried to convey a sense of security.

Just as he went to close the door, he heard her whisper loudly, "Kez?"

"Yes?"

"Thank you."

He smiled at her, making sure she looked him in the eyes. "For you, Lyric, any time."

Then he shut the door and heard her lock it behind him. He leaned against the wall and calmed down his breathing and tried not to concentrate on the nightgown that clung to her in all the right
places, and the dark circle of her nipples against the white. Instead he took a deep breath and listened to the silence around him.

He could hear voices in other parts of the palace, but no one came to the family apartments. Soon he heard the 'click' of the door opening, and he turned to see Lyric, now wrapped in a large black robe, looking at him. She stepped into the hall, checking to make sure it didn't close behind her.

"Ren has the building on lockdown, there shouldn't be anyone headed up here for a while."

Marab looked at her. "Are you okay?"

"No, but I will be."

"What happened?"

"I don't think I can describe it. Imagine your own mind turning against you, insisting your worst fears are in fact actually real, and happening to you over and over again. It was devastating"

He wanted to hug her, but she held up one hand to his chest, keeping him at arm's distance. Impulsively he grabbed her hand and pulled it to his lips. A spasm of something he couldn't quite interpret crossed her face. But she didn't pull away.

"Kez, don't."

"Don't what? Worry that some crazed assassin is coming after you and once again Hugs isn't here to protect you? You know I can't do that."

"I don't love you Kez, I never have."

"It doesn't take love to know that what we have is unique. This, whatever this is, deserves a chance to live, to find out what happens when feelings like these combust. You don't even have to leave your family. We can work this out around them. You just need to …"

"Need to what? Trust you? How could I ever trust you? I've seen you in a First Order uniform, and a Resistance uniform. Which one is the real Kez Marab, or is that even who you truly are? Nothing about you screams trust, yet you insist I can. I'm tired of going around and around with you. Please, just stop."

Marab held her palm to his cheek, breathing in that wonderful fragrance that was hers alone. "I've had many names in my life, so many that which is the right or wrong one doesn't fit with the personas of each name. I'm a little of all of them. Kez is my birth name, Marab was a convenient ID source when I needed a new last name. But who I am is a man in love with a dream. All I want is to be around you, love you, nothing more."

"Kez..."

"It's getting late, and you've had a bad fright tonight. Go to bed. I'll find one of Phasma's troopers to stand guard on the stairs. But Lyric, would you please just think about us?"

"There is no 'us'."

He smiled at her. "No, but there should be."

When she opened her open to protest, he placed a small kiss on her lower lip. "Go to sleep, think about it. I'll be around, Lyric. Remember I'll always have your back."
He turned and left, forcing himself down each step, as she stood in the hall watching him leave. Marab had to clench his fists and press his nails as tight as he could into his palms, to create an illusion of pain. Anything to give himself strength to walk away from her again.

When at last he reached the ground floor, he looked up and saw her standing at the rail, watching him. It was too dark to see if she was smiling, but he smiled in her direction just in case. He slipped out the garden door, then around to the front where he saw four Storm troopers guarding the front door to the palace. Good to know Phasma had actually sent help. He wondered what Hux would have done if he'd known no one was watching his family.

He headed toward his apartment in the city, taking a convoluted path through the city to try and shake off the tail Hux put on him the moment he set foot on Coruscant. When he was sure at last the coast was clear, he made his way to his permanent home base. Once inside, he logged onto the holonet and began researching what might have happened to Lyric.

Several hours later, Marab had twice as many questions, almost no answers, and was beginning to think he needed help to protect her. Professional help.
Retribution

Chapter Summary

Lyric discovers a Darker side of herself

Sorry, this one is a little longer than normal!

Chapter Seven

Hux was so livid it took all of his training to sit on the shuttle and not kill anyone. There was supposed to be security around his apartments at all times. How the fuck did an extremist, with contraband Sith technology get to his wife? At least Ren was holding off on the interrogation until he arrived back from the shipyards, and Hux had already told Phasma to make sure his kit was sharpened and ready to go.

This labor dispute at the shipyard had been a crock of shit, and Hux was beginning to put the two instances together to wonder who the hell was playing him for a fool. Obviously not Ren. He'd told him enough about Lyric's nightmare to know it wasn't the Supreme Leader behind her attack. Now that he and the boy-man had reached an accord, and Hux wasn't being Force-choked every day, they actually were making large in-roads for the First Order. Ren had been appalled at Lyric's dreams.

He'd not tried to reach Lyric, uncertain he could handle the pain he knew would be in her voice. She was already angry and he'd been unable to convey to her that he'd had to leave the planet for a short trip to the shipyards. He'd felt the heaviness come over her as she'd hit up the whiskey, but this pain amplifier felt like an iron spear hammering through his skull. He could only imagine what she must feel.

They were cleared for landing in front of the palace, and Hux was out the door the instant it opened. Captain Phasma and two of her lieutenants greeted him at the base of the ramp.

"Welcome home Field Marshall."

"Where's my family?"

"Lady Hux is in the living room, resting but awake. Lord Ren said to tell you he could make her sleep, but he doesn't want to."

"Good call. I'd probably kill him if he touched her right now."

"Yes, sir. Sloan and your sister are asleep, and I have two Death troopers monitoring their hallway. Also, as requested, your kit is in interrogation room two. Lord Ren will meet you there."

"Excellent. Please go to my wife and inform her of where I've been and what's going on. Tell her I'll check in after this. If she's unhappy or wants to see me at any time, bring her to me."

"Are you sure that's wise, sir?" Her eyebrow raised at the thought of the ballerina in the same room
with Hux's brand of precision torture.

"Phasma, my wife's been attacked. She might want some retribution herself. And I, I need to see her."

"Yes sir."

Hux strode toward the interrogation room with a strange taste in his mouth. He'd almost forgotten this feeling. It was a hunger, the need to feed a part of his soul crafted in the dark years of his youth, crafted by Brendol and Snoke through pain and punishment. Before going into the prisoner, he stopped in the guard room, watching through the camera as the captured fanatic slumped in the restraints.

"Tell me." He directed his command to the corporal at the command board.

"Yes sir. He's been mumbling since we removed him from the palace, but none of the words make any sense. Lord Ren did a cursory work up, but all he learned is the man is part of a group from Atollon sent here as part of a Followers of the True Jedi attack."

"Thank you, corporal."

"Also, per her instructions sir I radioed Lady Hux when they announced you were back. She's on her way from the library. Shall I have her wait in here?"

Hux thought about her being in the room while he worked and decided against it. If he were to suddenly throw his wife against a wall and fuck her silly, he didn't think the guards would be able to handle it.

"Yes corporal. If she wishes to watch she may, but I would prefer the scum not know she's close. We don't know what else he might to be programmed to do if his primary objective failed."

"Lord Ren is arriving, Field Marshall."

Hux waited until Ren was in the hall before turning on his heel and leaving the guard room. They met in front of the door to room two.

"Armitage, are you sure you're up to this?"

He snorted and rolled his eyes. "Ren, I've been working over fanatics like him since I was a teenager."

"Yes, but this is personal. He hurt your wife. Try to keep focused on who sent him and why. If you can lower his defenses, I will pull the information from him. Then we can do as we will."

Hux laid one hand on Ren's arm. "Lyric wants to join us."

Ren looked off to the side for a moment, then smiled. "She's coming, and Mama Bunny is pissed off."

"Why the hell does he call her 'Bunny'?"

Hux wasn't aware he'd actually spoken out loud until Ren chuckled. "Because when Lyric was a child she bounced around never staying still. When Ciara wanted a code name from Poe to identify Lyric, 'Bunny' seemed natural. My mother was 'Princess', and Han Solo was 'Handsome'."

"Did you have a nickname?"
"Ciara didn't like me, because I was a male and Force sensitive. Whenever Lyric and I had any contact it was usually her crying to me that Poe and his friends had left her behind. So, I would help her with the Force and how she needed to channel it to keep from killing someone. But then Poe left and took Lyric with him. Next time I saw her was with you here on Coruscant."

"Shall we get to work?"

*****

Lyric arrived in the guard room as Ren and Hux traded off their torture, so the prisoner never knew what was coming, physical or mental pain. She sent her image to Hux, saw him stand up and motion to Ren. Then Ren spoke in her head.

"Armitage wants to know if you have any requests."

"Do we know who sent him?"

"Oh yes, that animal you met on Serenno. Your husband got that about five minutes after he started. Anything else?"

"I want to know why. Otherwise, make him hurt Ren. You saw the details of the nightmare they drove me into. You saw what I saw. What would you do if someone did that to Rey?"

Ren turned around and told Hux. "Your wife said have fun."

With an evil smile through the two-way mirror toward her, Hux set back to work. She couldn't watch, not really. The only thing she enjoyed was the pain the degenerate felt. It would never compare to the horrors they had chosen for her torture. She sent them both a picture from her nightmare – Hux with his son's blood on his face and hands. She saw the line of his jaw flex as he pounded his prisoner's face with knuckles covered with solid brass.

"Why Lady Hux?"

The man's head lolled around, and he spit blood. "Because she's Force sensitive."

"So is the Supreme Leader. Why Lady Hux?"

"Kylo Ren ain't married to you. She was the target, but you are the one they're trying to hurt. All I was told is they needed Lyric Bey-Hux alive and in good spirits. Once she was brought to the Master, everything else would be forgiven."

Ren pulled hand close to man's face. "What would be forgiven?"

Hux could see the man losing focus to the pain. This is where he and Ren always worked best together – freeing information from reluctant prisoners. The brain can't stand pain input from two sources. Between Hux's flaying knives, and Ren's mental assault, they soon had all the information they needed.

Now that the man was basically a corpse held in the restraints, Hux had Lyric admitted to the room. He wouldn't touch her himself, knowing he was covered head to boot in blood and sweat, but allowed her to see her attacker. He studied her face as she leveled her gaze at the man, who amazingly managed to make eye contact with her.

"The Lady of the Moment," he managed to croak through crusted lips. "I know someone who's looking for you."
She moved only one hand. It was a movement Hux was intimately familiar with, and he caught himself to stop reaching for his own throat once he realized she was Force-choking the prisoner. The only outward sign of her violence other than the outstretched fingers, was the deep anger inside her eyes.

Hux and Ren stood and watched as after the man pleaded for his life, she snapped her fingers, and the man's neck broke in response. Lyric stood still, nostrils flared, body trembling as the reality of what she'd done took over and tears began to spill out of frightened eyes. She looked at the two men as if she didn't know them. Her body trembled as she poised to run away.

Ren held out his fingers to her, let her twine their hands. "Lyric, do you remember who I am, how we know each other?"

She nodded, chewing on her bottom lip. "Kylo. Ben Solo. We've known each other a long time."

Hux brought himself into her line of sight. He saw the wince as she took in his face.

"Armitage. Is that your blood, or his?"

"His, I'm fine. Are you alright?"

"I don't know yet, but I'll figure it out soon. I think I'd like to go now."

Ren nodded at Hux. "Go, I'll have this cleared out, and the case returned to your office. Take her out of here. Lyric, if you need me, or Rey, just call out. We'll be right there."

Hux took her arm and helped her into the hallway. The corporal had several clean towels and a bottle of water. Lyric refused any water and stared into space with eyes that were focused inward. After ridding himself of the better part of the gore, he took his wife's hand and they began the long walk back to their apartments.

Once out of the prison area, Lyric leaned into his side as the shock finally began to set in of what she'd done. He pulled her closer, whispering in her ear.

"Hang on love, don't fall apart on me yet. We'll be alone soon."

She nodded once and squeezed his hand. As they approached their doorway, he saw Phasma in the hallway, waiting for them.

"Captain, is this important?"

"There was a message from the Resistance spokesperson officially denying any responsibility for the attack on Lady Hux and offering any help we might need from their direction."

"Thank you, Captain. Please let them know we certainly appreciate their support."

They reached their apartments before Lyric fell apart. He tried to catch her, stop her, let her know what she was feeling was okay. But one look at the panic in her eyes and he realized he was worried about the wrong thing.

She'd loved the feeling of holding that man's life in her hands, and it scared her worse than anything in her life, other than falling from space in a crippled fighter.

Stripping off his bloodied uniform, he kept his eyes focused on her. Hers darted around the room, looking for a hiding place, looking for somewhere to run from the uncomfortable feelings that
were pouring through her. He knew that, because he'd seen that look on his own face, the first time Brendol forced him to kill a weaker child soldier.

He held out his hand, and she took it without hesitation. He stripped her quickly and walked her with him to the fresher. Instead of the shower, he turned on the water in the large stone soak tub they never used because it took ten minutes to fill. Hux decided to use that time to help her face what happened.

"Lyric."

"Hmm?"

"What's going on in your mind?"

"Was I right to kill that man."

"Of course you were, he attacked you, frightened you, made you feel your family was in danger. Family is everything, my love. Never feel ashamed to protect our family. You know I've killed for you and would do so a thousand times again to keep you and Sloan safe. This time you protected yourself, protected us and took your destiny in your own hands. I know it's a frightening concept, but never one to fear."

"Does this make me a bad person, Armi?"

"No my love, it's makes you very human."

He saw the color draining out of her face, and spun her around to the commode, just in time for her to heave violently. Once she was finished, he brought her water then carried her to the tub, climbing down the stairs, then arranging her against his chest. The water was warm, but not too hot, and he'd added her favorite oils blend – lavender and myrrh with a drop of rose.

For a long time they simply lay there, watching the city outside the windows. Then she turned around to him, studying his face as if looking for an elusive answer.

"Armi, where did you learn to do that?"

"Do what?"

"Whatever it was you were doing with those knives."

Hux leaned back and took a deep breath. "When didn't I know? My childhood was nothing like yours, you know that. My father thought me weak, too weak to ever be the emperor Brendol insisted I had the backing and ruthlessness to pursue. Since I didn't have the physical advantage to cower those I was meant to dominate, I turned to knives to give the fear my smaller size didn't inspire."

"Please don't teach Sloan that skill, or at least have the common sense to not let me know about it."

"That's why I don't usually invite you to watch me at work." He stroked her hair as she grabbed a cloth and began washing the gore from his face and neck. "It's a skill set that I try not to use unless the prisoner isn't cooperative with just Ren. Or an asshole I want to remember me."

Like Kez Marab, he thought to himself. He'd already been thinking of how he was going to repay the bastard for having the balls to fuck his wife, and then brag to him about it. The only thing he was certain of was that it would hurt, a lot, and he wanted to draw out the punishment until the pain
in his own soul was healed.

He looked up and realized Lyric was staring out the window. "What's wrong?"

"That nightmare, I can't get it out of my head. Maybe I should have taken Ren up on his offer to lock it away where it doesn't bother me."

Hux shook his head. "No. I don't ever want him in your head without my consent. I know it's your brain, but I've seen what that Sith can do to a man's head when he loses control. I might allow Rey to help you, once the baby comes, but I am concerned when it comes to Kylo Ren."

"Rey's pregnant?"

"I guess in the aftermath of what happened here, that information got overlooked. Yes, Ren and Rey are going to be parents. She's been taken off active duty, much to her dismay."

"Sloan and I have to go see her. Perhaps once this peace business is done."

"Can't you do that Force thing and talk in your minds?"

Her smile was wide and the room seemed to brighten from her mirth. "We can, but I spent most of my life hiding from other sensitives. I need her to start the connection, and right now I sense she's a little busy."

Hux smiled. He could only imagine what type of 'busy' Ren and his wife were at that moment. The rising of the blood after an evening like this brought strong emotions to men like Snoke's apprentices, raised on violence and passion. The only thing holding him back was Lyric herself. While he could tell she needed him to hold her, the rest of her mind was frustratingly quiet. He didn't want to scare her, but desperately wanted her.

"I'd love to know where you are?" His tone was low, welcoming.

She raised her face to his and kissed him, putting her hands on his neck to keep from floating away. Heat, pure and cleansing, burst from her like blaster fire, and he pulled her tight against the length of him. An image burst into his thoughts, so delicious he had to take her up on it.

Taking her hand, he climbed out of the tub and grabbed two towels. One he used to dry her and then himself. The other he tucked under his arm. Taking Lyric's hand, he used the other to grab a bottle of the oil blend she used to keep her skin smooth.

He spread the second towel on their bed and pulled Lyric to lay face down. Once she was settled, he poured some of the oil onto the skin of her back, recapped the bottled, and then returned his attention to her. His hands spread the light, fragrant liquid over the porcelain skin, taking care not to aggravate the still angry-looking scars. Almost two years since Yavin but these battle scars would always grace her formerly flawless skin.

Skipping her low back and ass, he moved to her legs, long and strong. When they stood side by side, their legs were almost the same length. But her muscles were different, long and lean, the skin firm and hairless from thigh to foot. He did the length of both legs before moving to her ankles and feet. The shattered ankle he touched as if it were glass instead of a mixture of robotics and bone. When he finished her feet, she almost growled with frustration, receiving a hand swap across her ass for her impudence.

Hux poured a small amount of oil into the well of his hand and shared it between them both. Then he started on her ass, each movement bringing him closer to her slit but never reaching, driving her
mad with need. He could smell her desire and knew how sweet it would be when he finally let her crest that waterfall.

When he was certain she was relaxed, he took a small portion of the oil and worked two fingers into her wet depths, smiling as she moaned and leaned into his fingers, trying to rock herself into oblivion.

"Ssh," he whispered in her ear. "Just relax. Let me take care of you."

This time he saw her shoulders release and knew she was almost where he wanted her. Pouring more oil into his hand, he used it along with the natural juices from her cunt to work one finger into the tight innocence of her ass. When she started to tense up, he whispered again in her ear, and as before, she relaxed.

With care and more oil, he managed two fingers fully when he could withhold no longer. Keeping his fingers in, he slid himself inside her wet cunt, almost blinded with the pressure against his cock. He gave her time to adjust to the strange fullness before returning his attention to her ass. As he slid deeper into the tight channel, he felt the pressure against his cock increase and his hips rocked against her.

Lyric cried out in surprise and need. He set up a rhythm between his hand and his cock, biting his lip to keep from coming too soon. The pressure in his balls was building and he started naming star destroyers in his head to back down from the edge. Her walls twitched around his cock, and a moment later she came screaming his name as she bucked and shuddered with the strength of her release.

Boneless beneath him, he took quick advantage of her relaxation to pull out from her wet cunt, and with a little more oil worked into her, he pressed his cock against the innocent muscles. Bearing down patiently but steadily, he whispered to her again at the uptake of her breath, her body adjusting to the strange invasion. When he was sure she was ready he pulled back slightly then pushed forward again.

While it wouldn't replace her cunt as his favorite place in the world, Hux would certainly die a happy man balls deep in her ass as well. With this tightness he wouldn't last long, and he used his clean hand to stimulate her clit as he gently fucked her ass. To complete the assault on her senses, he threw emotions at her: love, care, worry, need, want, need, love, love. He felt hers returned as pulses of love and need driving him insane with their depth.

He came in waves, blind to everything except the two of them. He pressed on Lyric's clit and she joined him, clamping around his cock and locking him into her until she floated back down to reality and his sweaty body across her back. Then she relaxed again, and he could gently pull his softening cock from her.

Limbs entwined, he asked her about the dream. The images came slow at first: war on Coruscant, the palace on fire, their family escaping through an armada around the planet. Then came the horror, faster now as if she needed to rid herself of the toxins before they destroyed her.

Running as outlaws through the Unknown regions, looking for other survivors, starving, mutinous crews, finally turning against each other over what to do to survive. On and on the images came until he placed a hand on her arm.

"Stop. I've seen enough."

Pulling her closer, "Do you want Ren to remove this?"
"I asked him what Rey would do. He said she'd use it fuel her fight. That's what I want to do. Armitage, I want to learn to fight, how to defend my family."

"Whatever you want, so long as the doctor approves."

"Armitage, promise me you will never lift a hand in anger to Sloan."

"Is this because of what you saw in that room?"

Lyric shook her head. "No, it's because of what I saw in my head."

Grasping her chin to make certain she would look him in the eyes, he promised, "Sloan is just as precious to me as you are. I could never raise a hand in anger to him, or to you."

"I know. In my heart I know that truth. That's what I have to hold to if I can't trust my head. Always trust my heart with you. I love you."

"I love you, Lyric. Of all the days for a labor dispute to pull me out to the shipyards."

"Do you think that might have been intentional?"

"I didn't earlier but now I'm beginning to wonder who is playing me like a puppet."

She didn't respond and soon he realized she'd finally relaxed enough to sleep. Hux meanwhile stared at the ceiling and wondered who was trying to drive him mad, and what his retribution would be when he found them. No one went after his family. No one.
Chapter Summary

Danger makes for strange bedfellows. Also - Poe takes his cousin on an unannounced training voyage.

Chapter Eight

Hux summoned Poe the following morning, hoping to speak with the Resistance commander between sessions. He'd not slept, hearing ominous noises every time he closed his eyes. Instead he'd watched Lyric sleep, sending her love especially when her dreams appeared troubled. Finally, he arisen and dressed, deciding to spend the early morning hours with Sloan and Bella.

He knew his sister needed to go home eventually, but with her own children grown and no living husband, Armitage was enjoying building a relationship with the only sibling he had left. It was selfish on his part, but knowing Bella was around eased up the iron bands which constantly kept him tense. Vigilant for another Snoke this time coming after Sloan.

The baby was wide awake and babbling happily into the air. When he saw his father, he'd held out his arms for him to acknowledge. Swinging the giggling baby into his arms, he laughed at the contentment he found in these silly moments. Bella smiled indulgently, and he took the bottle from her to feed Sloan himself. It was a moment he enjoyed, a small taste of understanding the bond between Lyric and their child.

Sloan always stared directly into his eyes, studying him, always holding his finger. Often, when they were alone, he would find himself telling his son stories from his own childhood. Always the good ones, never about the pain or the humiliations. Other times they simply studied each other, learning to accept each other as Lyric's men. He'd thought he'd resent his son for taking her time from him. Instead he'd learned the depth of his wife's heart was boundless and his love for his son felt primal at times.

Bella drew him from his revelry. "How is Lyric after the emergency?"

Hux looked up, "She'll be fine eventually. It will take a while to forget the damaging visions they assaulted her with."

"Poor child, when will she catch a break?"

"These fanatics are determined to make her a part of their cause. They must be truly desperate to come into the heart of the galaxy to try and take her."

"Armitage, we have to keep her and Sloan safe at all costs. Would you feel better if we were on Arkanis?"

"I don't know. I though having them with me here would be the only secure location and looked how that turned out. Lyric wants me to teach her to fight, and I'm running out of reasons to say no."
“Did she learn basic hand-to-hand when she went through training with the Resistance?”

“I don’t know. I have a meeting with Poe this morning and I intend to find out how much she knows. From personal experience she can punch, but the rest? I don’t know.”

“Lyric’s a tough woman. I think she’d going to surprise you.”

*****

Poe was seated in Hux’s office when the Field Marshall arrived.

“Dameron. Thank you for meeting with me.”

“Your Storm troopers gave the insinuation that it wasn’t optional.”

Hux smiled briefly. "Sorry, I might have been a little, pissed off, when I sent the invitation. It wasn't however, directed at you."

"I heard about what happened. How is my cousin?"

"Still sleeping and excused from the negotiations until further notice. She doesn't understand what's happening to her and wants me to teach her to defend herself."

Poe began to laugh. Hux raised one eyebrow waiting for him to explain. Wiping tears from his eyes, he finally could draw a breath. "Lyric can be more dangerous than three rathtars, if you attack her or her family. How did the testers put it? 'High protective instincts, willing to throw away the rules if they don't apply' or something along those words. The only thing she needs to know is that it's alright to shoot at people before they start shooting at you."

"But Hux, if you really want her to shine, put her in a fighter. She's a pilot, with instincts that are spot on. I know it might be hard. You watched what happened on Yavin, I only heard about it. But I know only two people who could have pulled off that maneuver. You're looking at one, and the other died after facing Kylo Ren on Crait. Let her fly again."

"I don't know if I can go through that, Dameron. Not after watching the aftermath of the crash. Five weeks in a bacta tank was torture for us both."

"Can I say something without you trying to arrest me or break my head or something?"

Sighing heavily, the red-head nodded briefly. "I'm might arrest you anyway but go ahead."

"Lyric needs to feel protected, but at the same time won't trust enough to let anyone take care of her. Except you. I've never seen her allow anyone to care for her to the extent you do. I assume that time between the crash and arriving on Coruscant is when everything changed. While I doubt you and I will ever see eye-to-eye on anything except her, I want you to know I appreciate you saving her life."

"Thank you, Dameron. I know that must have been hard for you to admit."

"You have no idea."

"Will you let us know if the Resistance learns anything more about this Followers of the True Jedi group?"

"Of course. Much as you might hate it Hugs, we're family now."
Poe smiled at the faint look of nausea on the red-head's face.

*****

"Where are you taking me?" Lyric sat next to Poe with blinders over her eyes.

"A surprise. Now are you going to behave or should I just turn us around now?"

"I'll be good."

When he'd called Lyric to tell her to plan on spending the afternoon with him, Poe had been deliberately vague on their destination. Hux hadn't actually given him permission to take his cousin anywhere, but at the same time he did say he wanted Lyric to learn more self-defense. For a Bey, that meant taking risks and flying.

The spaceport was on the outskirts of Galactic City, and rarely frequented by First Order ships, which meant less chance of Lyric being seen. When he removed her blindfold and she saw the dual-seat light clipper, her eyes shown like child.

"Please tell me we are flying that?"

"All afternoon."

Once in the air, they'd forgotten any issues between them. Instead they took turns gliding through the space lanes to reach the departure point for the destroyers, freighters, and interstellar liners. They took their jump point, and when the radio crackled for identification, Poe used BB-8 to secure them into the computer system. When the controllers gave the go ahead for jump, the two grinned at each other like wayward children, and jumped away from Coruscant.

Once in hyperspace, Lyric unbuckled herself from the co-pilot seat and explored the in-system clipper. Built for speed and short hop pleasure trips, it carried two cabins, a fresher, and a small vend kitchen. The new smell still lingered in the air.

"Where did you get this, Buddy?"

"A friend of the Resistance gave me permission to use it while on Coruscant. He's off world at this moment."

Lyric threw him a side glance. "Please tell me that 'friend' isn't Kez Marab?"

Pow laughed. "No, not Kez. But believe me, if he thought buying you a ship would be the way to your heart, he'd have one delivered every day."

"There is no way to my heart."

"Lyric, I have to ask this."


"Dameron, is there a good reason you've taken my wife and headed out of system?"

"You said she needed more self-defense training. I've got the perfect location. Force-approved, you might say."

"Where are you dragging my wife, you bantha shit?"
"Dagobah."

There was a long silence on the other end, as Poe and Lyric glanced at each other, waiting for the fireworks to start.

At last the silence was broken. "Dameron, I am roughly three hours behind you. If there is a hair on her head damaged, I will wear your skin as a coat. If you aren't at Dagobah when I arrive, consider your life forfeit."

Lyric snickered at the look on her cousin's face. "Let me take a stab here and say you didn't get Armitage's permission for me to go flying."

"He worries too much. You needed sunlight."

"And you thought we could find sunlight on Dagobah?"

"No, I thought we might find one of those Force Ghosts on Dagobah and they can tell us what the hell is going on with this Jeof Dooku and the Followers of the True Jedi."

"You don't think Ren hasn't tried to talk with his grandfather? I'm the only Force-sensitive in our family, who's coming to talk with me?"

"Lyric, you don't give yourself enough credit. You exude the Force with every motion. Dagobah is supposed to be strong in the Force, so I have no doubt we'll find some answers here."

She rolled her eyes at him and stalked back to the cabins. Choosing one, she slammed the door. In retrospect he shouldn't have been surprised she was angry. He did lie to her, but damn it he was tired of asking other people for permission to even look at his own cousin. Bella assured him there was enough milk on hand for Sloan to last two days. He'd timed this to the last jump back to Coruscant, and now here came Hux, again. Keeping them from being partners in crime. Again.

Two hours later, she joined him in the cockpit for the final approach to Dagobah. Dropping out of hyperspace, she was not at all amused to see the 'Kestrel' in orbit above the planet, apparently waiting for them.

When she glared at Poe for an answer, at least he had the balls to look guilty.
Bring Me to Life

Chapter Summary

Lyric gets to fly and Hux gets even with Kez Marab

Chapter Nine

Marab could hardly keep from touching her but could tell from the stiffness of her shoulders that it would end with his nose bloody. Poe apparently hadn't included the details to Lyric of all of their plans. Such as bringing her out here to train her Jedi senses, just as Luke Skywalker had done more than thirty-years ago. Or agreeing to Marab tagging along to provide another target for her to practice against.

He was desperate to find a way to join 'Vindicator's crew as he knew of no way he could sit still and let her disappear into space for almost a year, especially in light of the Serenno issue. Not that he didn't trust Hux to keep her safe, but his heart wouldn't let her waltz away. One day Hux was going to fuck up again, and this time Marab was going to be there to slam the lid down. Then Lyric would have no reason to stay.

The training plan was for Lyric to chase Poe, practicing her shooting instincts, through the empty skies above the swamp planet, where no one came if they didn't have to. Kez would provide backup in case anything went wrong. Lyric refused.

"Armitage is on his way here. He will kill both of you for torturing me. No."

"We have two hours. A lot can be accomplished in two hours."

"Fine, then let me chase Kez down."

When she wouldn't be swayed, he'd agreed to be the target. Anything to keep her safer was a positive move so far as he was concerned. It took all his strength to get into the x-wing without touching her. As he took off from the hanger of the 'Kestrel', he switched the helmet intercom system on.

"Are you ready, pretty lady?"

"Must you use that?" She sounded tired, not angry.

"My lady?"

"No, that's worse. Let's just get on with this. Standard attack formation 1?"

"No, let's move to defense 6. Let me see your rolls."

For an hour she was on the defensive, whipping through space above Dagobah like a solar wind. Marab watched in awe as turns and rolls which would have crushed an ordinary pilot appeared as easy as a simply barrel roll to her. She was quick on the trigger as well, targeting flares lighting up
his ship from all directions, and he could hear Dameron laughing through the comm.

"I told you she could fly," he kept repeating as Marab cursed.

They switched, and Marab soon regretted the change. She was like a second skin, everywhere he looked she was already there. So engrossed were they in their dogfight neither noticed the sleek black liner uncloaking behind the 'Kestrel' until the ship's comms on each x-wing crackled to life.

"Is this space pirate bothering you, my love?"

Hux. If he knew Lyric was here voluntarily it could go very bad for her. Before Lyric could click on, Marab took the bullet.

"Just out here minding my own business when Lady Hux decided I'd make for excellent target practice. Any chance we could let bygones be bygones and you let me out of here no questions asked?"

"I doubt it." He could hear the purr in Hux's voice. "We have quite a slate to clear, and I know Lord Ren would love to talk with you about Jeof Dooku."

It was only after he'd been taken prisoner by Hux and marched to his old special holding cell that he realized Dameron and Lyric hadn't said a word during his capture. He wondered briefly if he'd been set up.

*****

Hux sat at his desk on the liner and thought about the flying he'd watched his wife perform. It was poetry in the air, and he could see what Dameron meant about flying being her second career. She had an intuitiveness to her movements he envied. Hux was a passable pilot but relied on others. Lyric seemed to make herself part of the machine.

She came through the door from the shuttle hanger, flight suit open at the neck, the amber Kyber of her collar twinkling with the same glow as her eyes. He felt the crystal on his own warm in response. The smile on her lips was wide but went wider at the sight of him.

"Did you see me fly?"

"I did, and after a rather large heart attack I must confess you do have a certain talent for fighters. Perhaps you should meet with the flight instructors at the Academy to discuss some of your more aggressive moves."

"So I'm good?"

"Good? My love you are poetry in air. If you'd been trying to kill that piece of shit, he'd been dead three times over. Did you have any flashbacks from the wreck over Yavin?"

She nodded. "At first it was a little too familiar, but I managed to breathe through the worst of it. Then it just felt right."

He pulled her close, ripping the top seals on her flight suit to expose her white t-shirt. Sliding his hands around her waist he leaned his forehead against hers. She wrapped her arms around him, her nails lightly scratching his back.

The words poured out of him, unchecked and raw. "I didn't know where you went. All of a sudden, I got an image of the Coruscant space port and I freaked out. Then everything went silent, I guess
that was when you jumped to hyperspace. I'd have to ask Ren to know for sure."

"I'm so sorry. When Poe said he'd checked and my schedule was open, I assumed he meant he'd
check with you."

Hux grimaced. "Apparently Bella and Poe had been working on this little trip for a while. She's got
enough milk on hand for two days, so Poe intended for the three of you to stay here overnight."

Lyric shook her head. "Not with my permission. He could stay here with Marab on the 'Kestrel'. I
would have found my own way home."

Smiling at her, he replied, "Oh I know you would."

"Is Poe in trouble?"

"For taking you off planet without clearing it with me first, yes. For helping you gain confidence in
your abilities, no. However, did you know he was bringing Marab?"

"No, I've been very specific to Poe that Marab is not to be a part of my life. Apparently, he
overheard Poe arranging the shuttle and volunteered himself to join us."

Hux's eyes glittered dangerously. "Marab is a dead man."

When his lips met hers, he felt a piece of his heart snap back into place, and the pleasant hum he'd
come to associate with their connection was back, running like a machine. Hux was amazed at how
quickly he'd noticed her absence, and how angry he was Marab was there. The smuggler was
apparently going to push this as far as he could. Well, two could play at that game.

Pulling Lyric along in his wake, they made their way to what appeared to be another one of
Snoke's useless throne rooms, now in the midst of repurposing. Walls were roughed in dividing the
enormous space into rooms, and there was an incomplete berth, and a nonfunctional fresher. The
corners were in deep darkness, and beyond the berth she could see large star windows.

"What's this?" she wondered.

"Eventually these will be our quarters. This is our new ship. Plenty of room for you and Sloan,
even Bella when she's available. I was in such a hurry to get here I pulled her from the line without
the final work complete. But she's fast, or so Ren tells me. There are two, one for him and one for
us.

"Oh Armitage, it's going to be a wonderful setup."

"Lyric," he murmured again, then finished the unsealing of her flight suit. She pulled her arms
through and started on his belt and uniform. "Watching you fly was like poetry."

It took only moments before both were naked except for their matching collars. Hux smirked at
her, as he showed her the additions to the bedroom, including chains to link with her bracelets, and
cuffs on lengthy chains for her ankles. Once she was locked into the restraints, he tied a black silk
scarf around her eyes. Then he began his seduction. Or interrogation. Right now, he could use the
words interchangeably. He needed this Marab shit settled. Now.

He knew she was wet, had known since she danced onto the bridge. But she'd also kept some
secrets from him. This time he would know the truth. He started by kissing along her shoulder to
her neck.
"You saw Kez Marab yesterday, love. Did he say anything before Phasma arrived?"

"Only what he always says."

Hux kissed along her jaw line to the hollow of her throat. "What's that?"

"That I should drop everything and run away with him."

He moved down to the valley between her breasts. Already she twitched her hips wanting his attention lower. With slow, deliberate circles he licked around her nipples as his hands slid along her smooth hips.

"Did he say anything else?"

"Offered to start an affair. Said all he wanted was to be with me, that we could meet behind your back. I laughed at him."

To reward her for telling him the truth, he split her thighs and slid his thumb over her clit, bringing her first orgasm in seconds. Lyric screamed his name as she tried to clutch onto something as her body bucked and shook with the force of her release. Once her breathing returned to semi-normal, he slid two fingers inside, working his way slowly through her drenched folds to her warm, wet core.

Lyric moaned and ground herself against his hand. He leaned over and sucked a nipple into his mouth, feeling the brief rush of liquid before her cry of relief. She needed to express milk, soon.

"What should I do to you, for meeting with him behind my back."

Her need was rapidly making it harder to think, he could tell by the little frown mark between her sculpted eyebrows. "I don't know, but I'll accept whatever you think should be sufficient."

"You can't think straight, can you love?" He added a third finger insider her, smiling to himself as he continued stroking her toward the plateau.

"No, Armi."

"What do you want, my perfect Lyric?"

"I want you inside me, now."

He pulled his hand away, stopping all touch. She whined and pulled against the chains, trying to find where he'd gone, to pull him back to her. Using his hands to spread her wider, Hux watched himself slide into her tight warmth. Once inside, he saw her body at last relax into complete acceptance. That gave him such a rush, he felt himself grow larger. He groaned and shoved deep, sucking hard on her neck, then licking the rising bruise.

"Is this what you wanted, love?"

"Oh yes, please sir."

Hux had no more restraint. His hips drilled into her, lifting them both out of themselves into that space where their bodies and energies became one, where their hearts synchronized and nothing existed but them. Just as he felt her walls trembling around his, his own explosion burst deep inside her, and they shook and spasmed together with the force of their joining.

Afterward they lay entwined in each other's arms, content to let the rest of the universe spin around
them for a while. When she finally stirred, he sat up and released her restraints. Then he checked her wrists and ankles carefully to make sure there was no damage to her skin. Her rebuilt ankle he took extra care with, until he was satisfied it was uninjured. A quick massage to make sure her circulation was good, and then a long slow kiss to remind her what she meant to him. Last he removed the scarf, discarding in on the bed.

"Come along," he pulled her into his arms, wrapped in a sheet from the bed. "The fresher in here isn't hooked up, and the heat is spotty. Let's go to the current captain's cabin, which will be Sloan's when he's older."

They headed out of the construction zone. Once he was certain Lyric was in the fresher in their cabin, Hux returned to the empty room, clad only in a low-slung pair of sleeping pants. The room reeked of sex and lavender, and Hux felt himself begin to harden when Captain Phasma pulled a bound and gagged Kez Marab out of the darkness of the corners. The man's face was stone, but around the edges Hux could see the tell-tale pain. It was the worst torture Hux could have devised, and it had worked perfectly.

"I allowed you watch as I fucked my wife to illustrate a point, Marab. Lyric is mine, and any illusions you might have to the contrary are just that. Illusions. Nor will my wife be carrying on with you behind my back. In case you didn't notice, we wear each other's collar, and the only cock that will ever be inside Lyric from now on will be mine. Now, Dameron is flying your ship down to Dagobah, and Phasma is going to drop you down there as well. I would suggest you take this last get out of jail free card and make good use of it. Good-bye Marab."

Turning he heard the smuggler mumbling something. He motioned Phasma to remove the gag. Marab glared at him with hard, cold, grey eyes.

"You son of a bitch. She doesn't know we were here, does she? Of course not, because Lyric would never have consented to that. But you, you really don't give a shit, do you? You got off on knowing we were watching. How do you hide what true slime you are from her?"

"No, she doesn't know. But I will tell her, because she and I tell each other everything. Including your offer to fuck her behind my back. I should kill you for that alone, but as I said, this is the last time. Should I find you near her again, I won't hesitate to blast your dick first, then the rest of you."

"Then you better get an army, because I've got news for you and Kylo Ren. Dooku wants Lyric and he's building a clone army to come get her. So, unless you want a bloodbath on Coruscant, I would suggest you and the Supreme Leader pull your heads out of your collective asses and catch him."

"Phasma," Hux sneered at the pilot while addressing his aide. "I've changed my mind. Have Lt. Marab transferred to 'Punisher' and advise Kylo Ren we have the smuggler available for questioning on the Dooku matter."

"You see, asshole," Hux emphasized to his prisoner, "I was keeping you from the Supreme Leader and his interrogations, as a favor to my wife. She no longer wishes you protected, so have fun. When Ren wants something bad enough, he isn't a gentle person. Believe me, I have the scars to prove it."

Watching as Phasma dragged the smuggler away, Hux couldn't decide whether to crack open a small bottle of champagne to celebrate, or just go fuck his wife again. Smiling, he decided a hangover couldn't compare with Lyric giving him head.
Anniversary

Chapter Summary

Ren interrogates Marab, Hux and Lyric celebrate their first wedding anniversary.

Chapter Ten

Ren entered the interrogation room to find Kez Marab hanging in the restraints, depressed and broken. All fight seemed to be gone out of the smuggler, and Ren wondered what Hux did to completely destroy the man's will. Well, he reasoned, he'd soon know.

He left the mask behind, content to question Marab face to face. He had to confess a certain curiosity of the man who seemed obsessed with the Field Marshall's wife.

"Well Marab, I hear you've met the infamous Jeof Dooku. Where did you meet him and what can you tell me? Of course, I can just take the information as I want and let Hux have your wilted shell back when I'm finished? Your choice."

"Fuck you, Asshole. Instead of picking on me, why don't you actually try and help her?"

"Why does Lyric need help?"

"Because that shithead Dooku is coming for her. He's going to take her, from wherever you hid her, and use her in their cloning factory. To build clone armies of warriors with her skill sets. Just imagine, squadron after squadron of pilots with her flying abilities. He has the factory already up and running on Serenno. Now all he needs is her to complete the project."

Ren tore into Marab's thoughts, looking for every scrap of emotion, thought or interaction with Dooku, anything that would help them protect her against these fanatics. He was fascinated to discover that Marab actually was a First Order Intelligence officer, with an extremely high security clearance. He'd been on Coruscant and able to capture Lyric because his duty assignment that day was as her attendant. Once he'd seen her, he had to have her.

But the smuggler also had connections with the Resistance, along with half a dozen other warlords and gangs. Apparently Kez Marab was as infamous in smuggling circles as Ren's own father, Han Solo. Lyric had only cemented his legend among the lawless. A man reckless enough to sneak the Field Marshall's wife past a First Order blockade was a force to be reckoned with.

Ren had no desire to see Marab alone with Lyric, but the thoughts were so loud in the man's mind they all but jumped into Ren's head. To see a man with the girl he considered a baby sister made Ren furious, and he ripped from Marab's thoughts and snarled into his ear.

"You should be glad she isn't really my sister, or I'd strip those memories rather than know you ever think about Lyric that way. You're not good enough to lick her feet, scum."

Marab laughed, his breath ragged with pain. "You think I don't know that? I know I don't deserve her but neither does Hux."
"That's your opinion."

"That's a fact, Asshole. Where in the galaxy is it fair that a goddess should be saddled to a sadistic toad like Armitage Hux?"

"Have you ever seen Hux physically hurt Lyric?"

"Physically? No, the man's too smart for that. Mentally he's ripped her apart."

"And what makes you an expert on Lyric Hux? I've known her since she was a child."

At that Marab had nothing to say. Ren dove into his mind again, curious. He watched them meet, watched her kidnapping. Witnessed the conversation between them, when Lyric had revealed her secret. Felt the raw lust again toward her that made him nauseous, then experienced that kiss, the kiss that drove Marab around the galaxy in denial of his feelings until a very pregnant Lyric used his personal comms frequency to rescue her from Arkanis and Hux's betrayal.

Ren still remembered the frantic messages he and Rey received from Lyric, needing a ride from the middle of nowhere back to Arkanis, running an end around on her cheating husband. It had taken quite a bit of convincing from Rey for him to let her return to Hux, and in the end he'd agreed with his wife. Their marriage wasn't his business. He'd picked up Lyric because Rey asked, he'd let her return because Rey asked, but Rey was on Naboo, being pregnant on his grandmother's home world, while he searched for the Followers of the True Jedi. Without Rey's balance, Kylo was a dangerous, dark man.

Sliding deeper, he discovered the smuggler met Jeof Dooku while on First Order business on Serenno. He'd run some parts and weapons to other members of Dooku's fanatics, but never bought into the whole clone thing, until Lyric became involved. Since then, he'd been researching the old Clone Wars and what might happen should Dooku's ravings become reality.

Coming back toward the surface, to what happened to bring Marab to such a defeated position he saw Lyric flying above Dagobah, first time he'd seen her actually fighting. Ren was amazed at how the Force moved around the ship, defying laws of physics to move as she dictated. It made the landing on Yavin 4 understandable. Then he saw what Hux did to bring the smuggler so low and had to smiled to himself at Marab's misery. The man deserved it.

"Marab," Ren smiled grimly, "I foresee your stay as our guest continuing for a while."

"How long?"

"Until this matter is settled completely."

The door opened and one of Ren's Knights entered. "Shaan Ren will show you to your temporary quarters. We'll speak again soon."

Marab's eyes rolled, "Oh, I can't wait."

With a wave, Ren released the restraints and Marab slid to the ground. Shaan Ren, masked and covered head to toe in black pulled him up by the Force, and marched him out of the interrogation rooms. Kylo Ren mused over what he'd learned about Dooku. It was time to take a trip to Serenno, just he and the Knights. It had been too long since he and his personal attack squad had gotten any practice, and this sounded like a mission tailor-made for them.

Another masked Knight appeared at the door. "Tell the captain to set a course for Serenno. Maximum cloaking, shields full; we're going hunting for a myth."
"Which one, Lord Ren?"

"Darth Tyranus."

He could see the Knight's eyes glittering with excitement. "Should we expect Force-sensitives?"

Kylo Ren smiled, a cold, deadly expression that he knew his wife would hate.

"Oh, most definitely."

*****

Hux finished reading Ren's report just as Lyric emerged from the bedroom in their apartment. Returning to Coruscant had been a pleasant trip once Marab was transferred. They'd made the trip with milk to spare, although Lyric's breasts were tender and swollen as both Dameron and Hux himself had forgotten the breast pump.

As soon as they landed in front of the palace, Bella and Sloan met them at the door. After almost two full days away from her son, Lyric sobbed when they reunited. Since Hux had reports to fill, she'd spent the entire day in the nursery with Sloan. Now he was taking her to dinner, and then to the opera. It was their first wedding anniversary, and he couldn't wait to spend the evening just the two of them.

He smiled in approval of her attire. The black evening gown was form-fitted, cut low in the front and slit on the left side to the thigh. Her long legs were bare, and the delicate sandals were high and sexy. Her neck was bare except for his collar, and her hair was swept up in a loose bun, tendrils draping around her face and neck. She looked amazing, and as he held out the black cloak for her wrap, he laid small kisses along her shoulder.

"Stop," she murmured, "or we'll never get out of here."

"Oh no, I'm taking you out tonight. People are saying I have you locked away because I beat you. I'm quite eager for the press to know I don't beat my wife."

She smiled, "Like you actually care what people think."

Taking her arm, they exited to their awaiting speeder, soon on their way to the heart of Coruscant's entertainment district. Photographers followed them throughout the night, and as they emerged into the Imperial box at the opera, the standing ovation they received overwhelmed her, he could tell she was amazed at the support of the planet. When he held her in his arms, the applause was deafening.

While neither was a fan of opera, they attended because it was expected of them as the leading members of the First Order on planet. They sat close, hand in hand, and when the performance was over, they were invited backstage to meet the cast. He watched her out of the corner of his eye, her elegance and grace winning over those she met. As the night was winding down, they boarded the speeder to return home.

She leaned against his shoulder, almost asleep, and he pulled her onto his lap. As she snuggled against him, he heard her sigh softly.

"Lyric?"

"Yes, Armil?"
"Would you feel safer on Arkanis with Bella, or on the new destroyer I'm to take delivery of this week, 'Vindicator'?"

"Where will you feel more confident? If Sloan and I are on Arkanis or with you?"

He laughed bitterly. "Neither option is perfect, be happy I'm giving you the chance to voice your opinion."

"Then I choose for us to stay with you. No one will protect us better than you."

"Alright then, it's settled. I'll send the orders through once we get home. 'Vindicator' is supposed to leave the shipyard this week. Have the staff pack up what you want to take and put the rest into storage. We'll be off world for at least six months."

When they arrived home, Lyric went to change before nursing Sloan. Hux headed for his office. Phasma met him at the door.

"What's wrong?" He knew the captain well enough to see her distress.

"The Supreme Leader took the Knights of Ren to Serenno. We've not heard from them in several days. At what point should we be concerned?"

"Do you have any contact with the team?"

"Kiren Ren is with the ship. He reports all comms with the team are operational, he just can't reach them. Like they've disappeared off radar."

"Are all the Knights with Lord Ren?"

"Marcus Ren and Paden Ren are here on Coruscant. They've been part of Lady Hux's security detail. I believe the other five are with Lord Ren."

"Send word to Marcus and Paden. They may know more than we do. Keep me advised. I'll be unavailable for a few hours, but as soon as I awake, I'll want an update."

"Of course, Field Marshall. Anything else?"

"Prepare a dossier for me on the Clone Wars, specifically Count Dooku's plan, the Separatists, and the Jedi. Emphasis on weapons, tech, and weaknesses. Also send orders for the Third Fleet to move out once 'Vindicator' is on line. I'll be joining their shakedown cruise, along with my family. The two Knights will accompany us as security. Where is Rey?"

"Currently on Naboo, being pampered by the people there as she's carrying Queen Padme Amidala's great-grandchild. She says she's fine, and that as far as her bond with Lord Ren will let her know, he's alive but the mission is harder than he thought. She suggested perhaps Lady Lyric could contact Lord Ren?"

"Perhaps. Let's see what Marcus and Paden have to say. That's all for now Captain."

"Yes, Field Marshall."

Hux left the administration building for the family section, wondering what the hell Ren had gotten himself into, and if he should have Lyric search for him. As he opened the outer doors, he was confronted with a blaster, and two unfamiliar faces. The pain as the blaster ripped through his chest surprised him.
Chapter Eleven

Lyric felt the blast as it happened, fire rippling through her body like a storm. Sloan also felt the anguish tearing through his parents. Their combined screaming brought the base to life, and aid quickly to the Field Marshall as two men were caught running from the body. Hux was taken to medical, where a hysterical Lyric found him mere minutes after raising the alarm. Sloan had been handed off to the night nursemaid, overseen by Bella.

She felt an unnatural quiet in her head, like she was missing a gear. It took a moment to realize the crystal from his collar wasn't sending her any information. As the doctors cut his uniform away, one reached toward his neck to cut away the collar, remove the mark in order to prepare him for a bacta tank. Lyric stepped forward, one hand on the man's arm.

"I'll do it," she whispered, using the biomechanical fingerprint function to remove the black titanium collar. The amber clasp seemed cold and empty as the new hole in her soul.

Once Armitage was stable, the doctors placed him in the tank, then came to speak with her.

"Lady Hux, it's very touch and go right now. As you could see, the damage to his chest is quite extensive. These next few days will be critical, but we see no reason why he shouldn't recover."

Her eyes glinted dangerously. "If anything happens to my husband, I'll remember those words doctor. I certainly hope you aren't setting me up with false promises."

"Never, Lady Hux. I make no more promises to you than I did to the Field Marshall when you were the one in peril. But you should rest. This is going to be a process, just as with your own recovery, though hopefully much less time."

"I'll stay in here tonight."

"As you wish, my lady. I'll have a rolling bed brought in, along with bedding."

"Thank you, doctor. I'm not trying to be difficult but Armitage hasn't ever been ill in all the years I've known him. It's petrifying to see him in this state."

The man smiled gently. "As it was for him, when the places were reversed."

After the doctor left, Lyric placed her hand on the glass of the tank, willing her thoughts to his, desperate for him to answer her, but all she could hear was the gurgling of the recycle unit of the tank. She slid down the tank to a puddle in the floor.
For the first time in over two years, she was completely alone.

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Several hours later, Captain Phasma arrived to check on the Field Marshall and was amazed to discover Lyric, curled up on the floor beside the tank. Furious she sought out the charge nurse to find out why the Field Marshall's wife was sleeping on the floor.

"We tried to get her to leave, or at least use the rolling bed, but she said she wasn't tired. She was awake an hour ago when we took vital signs."

Returning to Hux's room, Phasma discovered Lyric awake now and trying to pull her thoughts together. Dark circles were already starting under her eyes, and her clothes were bloody and rumpled.

"Captain, what can you tell me about the men who attacked my husband?"

"They were from Atollon, apparently this was the attack your own preceded. Several other members have been rounded up and are in interrogation as we speak. Most are members of the Followers of the True Jedi group and their rantings are wild and treasonous."

Lyric's eyes appeared to be calculating something. "So, the attack was real. Which means the other things that fanatic said are also real. He called me the lady of the moment. What moment? Was that just some catchy phrase, or did it mean something deeper?"

"I beg pardon, my lady, but are you asking me these questions, or yourself?"

"Perhaps a little of both, Captain. I confess I feel a little adrift without Armitage's support, but maybe that's good thing. Maybe I can lean on myself a little without breaking, right Captain?"

Phasma studied the tall brunette with a practiced eye. Lyric was an amazingly beautiful woman, but the warrior was beginning to see there was something more behind the façade. She'd watched Lyric's dogfight with the smuggler with amazement and knew that if Lyric could survive what had happened on Yavin, she'd be fine.

"My lady, I will be glad to render any assistance I can. Until the... until Hux's condition stabilizes, you will have to be the face of the First Order."

"What?!"

"Lord Ren is on Serenno with the Knights investigating this Jeof Dooku and is unreachable by our normal comms systems, Lady Rey is pregnant on Naboo being protected by Lord Ren's people, and Hux is incapacitated in a bacta tank. There is no one else."

She watched the ballerina place both hands on the tank containing the Field Marshall, and for the first time Phasma realized she had underestimated the woman because of her age and her beauty. But Lyric Bey-Hux was also a child of the Resistance and knew, along with Phasma, if word got out that only one of the leaders of the First Order was down, let alone three, chaos would descend on all fronts.

Lyric cleared her throat, then turned around to face the Captain. "Very well, first things first. Find all these Atollon traitors, question them until you know everything. They've attacked me, they've attacked my husband. I want to know if there are plans to go after my child."

"Yes, my lady."
"Second, send Marcus Ren and Paden Ren to me as soon as possible. I need to know if they were successful in reaching the other Knights. How did the peace accords end up?"

"Very well, my lady. Most of the Inner planets have already signed and contributed to the First Order. Coruscant was first among them, followed by Chandrila and Naboo. Other systems are already verbally pledging support as well."

"Excellent. Captain, I know you have no reason to trust or believe in me, but I think there's going to be an attack on Galactic City and soon. Find a way to get word quietly to those in the city you think can help with defense and create some plans. We can't be caught unaware."

"Also, Captain?"

"Yes, my lady?"

"Do you know if my cousin is still on Coruscant?"

"No, my lady. I don't know if he returned here after Dagobah or not. No sign of the 'Kestrel' has been seen in any of the spaceports here on the planet."

"I see."

Phasma narrowed her eyes at Lyric. "Dameron isn't who you're really asking about, is it?"

Lyric cast her eyes at the bacta tank, then sighed heavily. "I just feel Kez Marab knows more about this True Jedi group that he's told us. Information that could help us defeat these idiots."

"Well," Phasma decided, "then let's hope Lord Ren got the information he needed from the smuggler once he was transferred to 'Punisher'."

"What?"

"Hux had Marab transferred to Kylo Ren for questioning on the whole Dooku matter and what exactly he knows and how."

"When was this?"

"After Dagobah. Didn't the Field Marshall tell you about Marab's punishment?"

Lyric only shook her head, uncertainty on her face. Phasma found it interesting Hux hadn't told her after assuring Marab they had no secrets from each other. A part of her wondered if she should keep her mouth shut or tell the little ballerina exactly what Hux did. In the end she decided it was better to let it slide right now and wait until Hux was well before springing this on Lyric.

It would be more amusing when Hux could defend himself from his loth-cat wife.

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"Lyric?"

"Rey! I've been waiting to hear from you."

"Why didn't you contact me?"

"Because I've always hidden from the Force. I have to wait for someone to notice me."
"I'm sorry, I've been busy yelling at Ben."

"So, you've heard from Kylo?"

"They're fine, working undercover on Serenno trying to infiltrate the Followers. He found out from one of the Knights Hux was shot and that almost blew the whole deal. He was ready to fly to Coruscant until I convinced him you have the situation under control. You do, don't you?"

"What?"

"Have everything under control?"

"Oh, I hope so. Are you still on Naboo?"

Lyric sensed Rey's frustration. "Ben's relatives here won't let me lift a finger. I have to practically throw a fit to get to train. All because this is Padme's great-grandchild. And apparently a girl, so she'll be queen here one day, like her great-grandmother."

"Do you know where my cousin might be?"

Rey became evasive. "He's back with the Resistance, but he won't tell me where. Do you need him."

"I do. With Armitage in a bacta tank, I'd feel better with someone who's on my side around watching my back."

"I'll find Poe and send him to you. Meanwhile, if I can do anything for you from Naboo, just let me know."

Somehow after speaking with Rey, Lyric felt even more alone.

The edges of her bedroom began to glow with a bluish light. She recognized it as similar to the visit from Ben Kenobi and wondered if the Jedi was here to tell her everything she was doing wrong.

"On the contrary," a strange male voice intoned. "I happen to think what you are doing is the right thing. But I'm here to help you out anyway."

"You aren't Ben," she stated after looking at her visitor. He was younger than Ben, taller, with a looseness to his frame that reminded her of someone else. "You have to be Anakin. You remind me of Kylo."

The ghost smiled, and Lyric could see how Padme Amidala had fallen for this intense, powerful Jedi. "If you mean my Ben, then yes. He's got a lot of my mannerism."

"Well, you should tell him that. He spends a lot of time trying to talk to you."

"I know. But it's harder to talk to family, especially our family. Too much drama for us to ever be able to just sit down and have cozy dinners. But Ben isn't why I'm here, or at least, not the entire reason I'm here. You need help taking charge while Hux is out of commission, and I have some experience in being in charge under stressful times."

"I'd rather you help Kylo with the situation on Serenno," she groused. "All I need to do is smile and wave, the troopers will take care of everything else."

"Never let your military know they are indispensable. They'll take over the first time they don't agree with your direction. As for Ben, for right now he has the situation under control. Eventually,
we will need to be on Serenno, but we need your husband recovered first. Our job is to maintain peace here with the Inner planets."

"What would you suggest I do then? As soon as people know I'm here alone the vultures will be circling."

"We release a message that the Field Marshall was the victim of an assassination attempt while on the way home from the opera. You will make the announcement, along with a brief statement that the First Order has authorized you to act as a go-between until Hux is on his feet again, and Lord Ren returned from urgent business in the Outer Rim."

"Okay, I do that and here comes the Resistance."

"Aren't you bringing your cousin here?"

"Yes, but..."

"No buts. Remember what Hux said. Protect your family. Dameron is still your family, just as Hux and Bella and Sloan. That will keep the Resistance from acting on the moment."

"What did you say?"

Anakin smiled at her paleness. "You are indeed the Lady of the Moment. This Moment, the moment when if we aren't careful, the galaxy will be lost to another millennium of war and darkness. But your stability will keep that from happening. Coruscant will maintain its peace due to your quick actions. The Followers' plan to cause instability in the Core will fail because you will hold the First Order's peace together with your personality and the Force."

"You say it like it's already happened."

"In some timelines, it has. But we are right here, right now. You are the only one we have who can manage this, Lyric. Let your healing touch work here, where war would devastate let peace reign instead. Believe in yourself, and me, and we can keep things on an even keel until Hux recovers."

"So he will recover?" Lyric stood toe to toe with the taller Skywalker patriarch.

"Of course. It would take more than a mere blaster to the chest to kill a Hux."

"How did he manage to do this month after month? Watching as all I did was twist and float in oblivion? I can't feel him. I see him, I know he's there, but I don't feel anything coming from him."

"It's very unique that you can sense him through those Kybers at all. But that sense saved his life, you know that. Sloan is also linked very tightly to both his parents. Thankfully he didn't feel the pain as you did, only the knowledge his father was in danger and you were upset about it. He's going to be quite a handful as he grows, just like Ben was as a child."

"Gods help me if they ever get into a physical match."

"They will," Anakin laughed. "And you will end up throwing both of them through the air into a river. A very cold river, I'll give you the precise location later. But Sloan's part of the balance, just as Ben and Rey's daughter will be. The Force works everything in pairs, in case you hadn't noticed. Balance in all things."

"What do I do now?" She could hear the whine in her voice and hated how young it made her sound. "How do I keep the balls in the air?"
"Make the announcement. Set up a reward for information and press these traitors you have in lock-up for every drop of information they have. Ben Kenobi or I will be back tomorrow night to discuss where we are, and what to do next. Don't worry, we've got you."

Then he was gone, and the room seemed even darker for the loss of the bluish glow. Unable to sleep, she dressed in a sweater, tights, and low boots, and returned to the med-bay to sit beside Armitage and think about what Rey and Anakin Skywalker told her. Could she do it, convince an entire galaxy of diversity that she, a professional ballerina, was capable of holding things together while the real warriors fought their individual battles?

Medics came in and out throughout the early morning hours, yet Lyric never moved. Her eyes locked on his body, the blackish-red wound on his chest growing smaller day by day. As the sun rose over Galactic City, Phasma knocked quietly on the door.

"My lady, the press conference is in one hour."

"Thank you, Captain. Please collect me from here five minutes before."

Sensing the captain's confusion, Lyric at last broke the connection to Hux and stared at the tall blonde. "Someone tried to murder my husband. I will not put on anything I don't feel just to give the First Order a better photo op. This is who I am, and this is who I will be until either he wakes up, or Lord Ren returns from his mission. Do I make myself clear, Captain?"

"Yes, my lady. I'll be here at the five-minute mark."

"Thank you."

Turning her eyes back to her husband, she dismissed the woman from her mind as she reached through the emptiness, searching diligently for the returning spark that would prove Armitage would be alright. The amber on her own collar hung dull and cold against the skin, another reminder of her loneliness. She sent him images anyway, of herself carrying on in his name, of Sloan being brought three times a day to pat the tank along with his mother to assure Hux of their love, and of how much she missed laying entwined within his embrace.

When Phasma returned, she had company. Poe Dameron rushed around the First Order officer and pulled Lyric into a giant bear hug. She allowed herself a moment of self-pity, sagging in her cousin's arms as the enormousness of what she was about to attempt settled around her neck.

"It's gonna be okay Bunny, he'll be okay."

"I know. I have to go do this press conference."

Poe held her hands. "Do you want me to come with you?"

She knew the gratitude shining from her eyes was pitiful. "Please?"

So, they filed into the conference room, filled with reporters from every news source in the galaxy. Phasma stood at Lyric's right hand, Poe on the left slightly behind her, keeping an eye on the audience, daring anyone to question his right to stand with his family.

"Good morning, citizens of the galaxy. Last night, after returning to the base from the opera, my husband Field Marshall Armitage Hux was shot at close range near First Order Headquarters. Both assailants were shot by security forces and are awaiting questioning. In addition, four other conspirators were apprehended attempting to flee after their cowardly act."
Tears filled her eyes, but her voice held steady. "The Field Marshall is still in critical condition and may need more surgery before we can say for certain he will survive." Her voice cracked on that word. "Until we are certain that there are no more of these cowards hiding on the planet, a curfew of ten bells is instituted for the next seven days. If at that time, no further incidents of violence are recorded, the curfew will be lifted. All ships coming or going may be subject to reasonable search, as we attempt to locate these individuals."

"Until Armitage awakes, or the Supreme Leader Lord Ren returns from his mission against these traitors, I will represent the First Order and its operations. Understandably, my main focus is my family, but the protection of Coruscant, and all member planets of the First Order is equally important, and not a duty I undertake lightly. I will expect you to all be a little kind, at least for today. It's been a very long night."

The first reporter raised a hand and was acknowledged by Phasma. "Lady Hux, how extensive are the Field Marshall's injuries?"

"The blaster caught him on the left side of his chest, slightly to the right of the nipple. The burns are extensive, tissue damage as well as broken ribs and a damaged lung. By pure luck, the shot missed hitting his heart directly. He did lose quite a bit of blood and has a severe concussion from the impact against the concrete of the steps."

Another chimed in. "Where is Lord Ren? Why doesn't he or Lady Rey return to assist at such a critical time?"

"Lord Ren is already involved in a highly sensitive mission on the far side of the galaxy, and Lady Rey is pregnant and under a doctor's care on Naboo. While I understand everyone's hesitation please rest assured I have all of Armitage's best advisers right along beside me, and the doctors are hopeful that my husband will regain consciousness in a few days."

The rest of the news conference went along the same lines, until finally Poe could see Lyric's knees threatening to buckle. He stepped forward and put his hand around her waist.

"Sorry guys, that's all for now. Let's give the lady a break on her first day, okay?"

"What's your part in this Commander Dameron? What is the Resistance's part in all this?"

Time to blast their family secret to the winds and let the chips fall where they might. "Lyric and I are cousins and grew up together. Though our political views might not be the same, we are family regardless. Right now, a member of my family is hurting, and another's life is hanging by a thread. I'm here to support Lyric and Sloan, which means by extension, Field Marshall Hux. The Resistance is appalled at this senseless attack and will support all lawful investigations into the shooting."

Pulling Lyric close to his side, he escorted her back to the med-bay, where they discovered the room housing Hux's tank had been transformed into a temporary office/bedroom for the duration. With tears in her eyes, Lyric personally thanked each one of them for making her time there easier. Soon they drifted off, leaving Lyric and Poe alone with the injured Hux.

"Damn it all, Buddy. Why would they shoot him?"

"To make it easier to get to you. You have to admit, Hugs keeps you pretty secured from the real world."

"He does not!"
"Bunny, be honest. The man threatened to skin me for taking you flying. He has a bit of a possessive streak when it comes to you."

"Would you escort me back to our apartment? I need to gather some things together and express milk for Sloan for tonight."

After telling the medic on duty she would be back before dinnertime, Poe escorted her out of the medical building and across the central parade grounds to the palace. As they approached the building, Poe could have sworn he saw a body in the bushes to the side of the entrance, but once they were there, he could see no sign of any other presence.

Lyric showed Poe to a room he could use and assigned one of her assistants to be his while on Coruscant, then headed to her own bedroom. As he watched her walk down the hall, Poe was again struck by how young she looked. Too young for this much responsibility. He resolved to see that she was well protected until this True Jedi group was handled.
Too Many Visitors

Chapter Summary

Lyric has to deal with one too many visitors.

Chapter Twelve

Entering their bedroom alone was heartbreaking. The first thing she grabbed was his pillow, to inhale deeply of the musk and crisp, clean summer sunshine smell that was Armitage. She sank to her knees, refusing to think of how close she came to losing him. She could still feel the burning ripple of pain slamming through her like a freight train, followed by an absolute quiet that terrified her. Tears fell unchecked down her cheeks and onto the crisp linen.

When she looked up, Kez Marab was standing in her bedroom door. He was back in his First Order uniform and the bruises and black eye could only have come from Kylo Ren's questioning. The panic and fear on his face eased when he saw her sitting on the floor.

"Kez?" Her mind refused to accept his presence.

"I heard about Armitage, and I got back as fast as I could, considering Poe still has my ship. Are you all right? Is Sloan okay?" He glanced around, his eyes registering at last where they were.

"Armitage was the only one shot. Outside the Administration building, as he was leaving to come home to me." Tears threatened her eyes again. "How did you get in here?"

"This palace is riddled with secret passages. All I had to do was figure out which one brought me here."

"No, how did you get away from Kylo Ren? He isn't in the habit of setting his prisoners free. Especially when they've been gift wrapped by Armitage and hand delivered."

Marab smiled, leaning against the door's frame. "Your husband and Kylo Ren keep forgetting who they're dealing with. I've been in the First Order a long time, and a lot of people owe me a lot. Besides, I couldn't leave you here alone, knowing Dooku and his plans for you. I thought I heard Poe's voice."

Lyric nodded. "He's come to help me while Armitage is injured."

Marab crossed the room and pulled her into his arms, unable to stay away any longer. Against her will, her body sagged into his embrace. "Thank the gods you and the boy are all right. I've been pushing all my sources to make certain nothing happens to the baby. Where is he now?"

"Bella has him. They're probably in the panic room until morning. I just came to pack a few things to take with me to the medical center, and pump milk for the night."

"I've been following you most of the day, shadowing from a distance to make sure you were okay."
"Kez, don't..."

"Lyric, stop. Right now, Poe and I are the only ones on this base on your side, and I happen to be on the right side to get you whatever help you need. Those old bastards on Hux's council are going to take one look at you and carve you up for breakfast. They'd start another war against Serenno before Ren and his Knights have time to finish their operation if it meant they could break out their planet busting technology again. I'm here to help you, and Poe, stay in command and keep those war dragons on a chain."

She turned her back, and he realized she was pumping breast milk for Sloan. His face turned bright red, and he studied the paintings hanging in their room. Lyric grinned to herself, pleased at finally embarrassing the smuggler.

"How did you really get away from Ren and 'Punisher'?"

"I can't reveal all my secrets to you pretty lady. Then what would we have to talk about?"

"I've got five minutes before these finish. Might as well make good use of our time."

"I called in several favors, broke out of the lockup and hopped a ride back with a supply ship bound for Coruscant. Sometimes you just have to know who to ask for what, in order to get what you need."

"Why do I find this so hard to believe?"

"What I can say? You're a magnet whose pull I cannot resist."

She blushed hard at that comment. "I need to get back to Hux." With her back to him, he couldn't see her cap off the bottles, then clean her nipples and close her top. Disposing of the one-time use shields, she stood up and made sure she was decent before standing and walking out to the kitchen to place the bottles in the fridge. When she faced him at last, she'd had time to plaster a neutral look on her face. "You need to go."

Marab nodded. "I know. Will you be back here in the morning?"

She nodded.

"Then I'll meet you here in the morning."

He leaned down to kiss her, and Lyric felt herself leaning into the smuggler's embrace. Oh gods how that man could kiss. His arms snaked around her waist, and she found herself laying in his arms across her sofa.

"No. I can't."

"Lyric, I'm sorry." He leaped off her, his haste giving her a glimpse of the outline of the hard cock under his pants. "I didn't come here to make you uncomfortable."

"Then why are you here Kez, really?"

It poured out of him like water. "Because I love you and it's killing me to be apart, especially with all this shit going on. After what happened above Dagobah, then having to endure Kylo Ren rifling through my memories like I'm his personal holo. Now Hux is injured which means you're wide open to attacks from not just the True Jedi idiots, but by those in the First Order who don't think you're good enough to be in charge. Every moment I walk around another corner and see you alive
is a good moment for me, and the knowledge that Hux is going to take you away with 'Vindicator' for months if not years is tearing me apart."

His mouth fell on hers again, and this time she had no energy left to resist him. The furor of his need burned through her and she simply responded to his caresses, instinct pushing her into autopilot. When his hand reached for the waist band of her pants though, she grabbed his hand and shook her head.

"No. I can't be unfaithful to him, especially not now."

"What do you owe him, Lyre? Give yourself a moment of pleasure before returning to the shit of this situation. All I want is to make you feel better."

"No Kez. First of all, I love him and I won't let him or anyone think that while he was fighting for his life, I was off fucking another man. Second, I have no implant. Armitage does."

Marab sat back on his heels, the look in his eyes hooded. "He took the implant, even though it's less effective?"

"My blood pressure problems prevent me from having one. The only other option was temporary sterilization, and we both refused."

Marab leaned his forehead against hers. "You're going to be the death of me, you know that right?"

"I didn't ask for you to fall for me."

"I know, I did that one all by myself." He stood up, pulling her from the bed with him. "Come on, let's get your things together and get you back to medical before someone sends a search party for you."

Marab fidgeted by the door while she got some clothes and toiletries into a backpack, along with her breast pump and several datapads. Just as they were about to leave, he pulled her elbow back.

"If you need me, and I'm not around, go to the comms center and send a message to the same frequency you used to reach me from Arkanis. I've changed my business frequency to another, so this one will be for you and me alone. I still have a job; I have to work, so I'll need at least five minutes to reach you from anywhere on the base. And you are not to leave this base under any circumstances. That's an order, pretty lady."

She nodded, and he opened the door to take a quick look around. There was no one in the hallway, so he let her out, following in the shadows a discrete distance as she made her way back to the medical center. Just before she left the shadows to head up the stairs, he caressed the small of her back.

"I'll be listening," he whispered as she marched up the steps.

Once inside the door, she leaned against it for support, willing her pounding heart to calm down. Luckily, she met no one she knew on her way back to Armitage's room. The doctor was arriving just as she entered, so she dumped her packs on the temporary bed and waited patiently for news.

"All his vital signs look good, Lady Hux. Now we just have to wait for time to work its magic."

"Thank you doctor."
After the man left, Lyric paced for a while, thinking about what she'd learned from Kez. The palace was riddled with secret passages? Did Armitage and Kylo know about them? Had the Resistance used them to learn First Order secrets?

A knock on the door, and suddenly two of Kylo's Knights were before her. Both were dressed in solid black, but the masks from their faces were currently in their hands. One was tall, with a thin frame, black hair and black eyes; while the other was average height with blue eyes and brown hair. Both looked at her like she was a different species.

"You called for us Lady Hux?"

"Actually, I think Armitage originally sent for you because we need to formulate some security plans concerning these True Jedi fanatics. The issue which I am more concerned about is whether either of you has spoken with Lord Ren or any of the other Knights currently on Serenno?"

The short Knight spoke, disdain dripping down his nose at her. "Lord Ren and the Knights are on a secret mission. We are under orders not to break silence for anything except a dire emergency."

"You don't think the Field Marshall's attempted assassination is a dire emergency?"

"Lord Ren was advised of the situation here on Coruscant and decided to continue on at Serenno."

Lyric hadn't slept in almost two days, and she was tired of men who thought she was just a pretty face. Glaring at the two Knights, she began to speak to them as she would Ren, through her very opinionated mind.

"Gentlemen, while I understand you don't know that I'm Force sensitive as well, that is no excuse for you to be rude to me, either as a woman and especially not as the wife of the leader of the Combined Forces of the First Order. Now, again, is Lord Ren safe?"

Their eyes went wide as she blasted like a torch across their minds. One glanced at each other, and suddenly the attitudes of both men changed.

"Pardon Lady Hux, we were unaware of your talents."

"As are most people, and that is how it is to remain."

"That's how you knew about the shooting, you felt Lord Hux's pain through the Force?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry, my lady. No one should have to feel that type of pain, especially not by association. It can be life-altering."

"About as altering as falling from space. Now, which of you is which?"

The short man spoke again. "I am Paden Ren; my companion is Marcus Ren. We've been on your security since your return from Arkanis."

"Then thank you both, I've never seen either of you so you're excellent at your jobs."

"Thank you, my lady. But we do have one question we need to broach with you that may be uncomfortable."

She raised one eyebrow and nodded her head. "Proceed."
"Lt. Kez Marab," intoned Paden

"What are your feelings and intentions toward this traitor?" questioned Marcus.

Lyric leaned back in her chair studying the two Knights for a long moment. "I do not love Kez Marab. Most days I barely like him. Once, not too long ago, he helped me out of a bad situation. Now he is concerned about my safety, as are you two gentlemen..."

Marcus Ren interrupted loudly, "Kez Marab is no gentleman."

She narrowed her eyes. "I am well aware of Lt. Marab's shortcomings, Marcus Ren. And I have no intentions of betraying either my husband or the First Order for Lt. Marab. However, I will ask you to not keep him away, unless you feel there is an imminent danger. He knows Dooku personally and may have information for me. But I do not wish to be alone with him."

"Now gentlemen, I would like to make sure my son is secure as well. Lady Bella and Sloan will be in the living quarters, while I will split my time between here and there until Armitage awakes. We can revisit things at that time. Since you know I am Force-sensitive, you have my permission to contact me that way, please do not abuse the privilege."

The two men stood for a moment, speaking between themselves. She noticed their discomfort.

"Is there something wrong, gentlemen?"

"Lady Hux, are those amber Kybers in your necklace and wristbands?"

She smiled, thinking of the other amber Kyber currently in her bra, next to her heart. "Yes, they were a present from my husband."

"And you know what Kyber crystals are?"

"Oh yes. Sometime when he's in a good mood, be sure to ask Lord Ren why he decided to give Armitage Kyber crystals for my jewelry. I'm sure it must be a funny story, but he keeps avoiding me when I ask the question. But that does lead me to another question for you both."

"Yes, Lady Hux?"

"How old were you when your sensitivity became knowledge?"

"Are you concerned about Sloan?"

Her eyes pleaded. "I'm the only sensitive in my family, but apparently I am atypical in the Force. I've known Ren most of my life, both before and after Snoke and the Jedi Temple. But when I look at my son, it's hard to picture what he's going to go through. I fear constantly another dark Sith rising by using my son's light just as Snoke did to Ren."

Paden took her hand. "I was a small child when a jar fell off a high shelf. It would have killed my mother so I moved the jar out of the way. But even before that I could feel the Force, just as I feel it in you, moving around everything and everyone."

"Don't be afraid. Above all he's your son. Just love him and it will all be okay." Marcus' dark eyes drilled into hers and Lyric wondered what his mother had done.

With that the two Knights left and Lyric was alone with the bacta tank and her wounded warrior. She worked as she sat beside him, reading through requisitions and commands until she felt her
head pounding from the strain of keeping up. Rubbing her eyes, she looked up at Hux's face, as much as she could see past the breathing mask. Sighing, she shoved all the datapads off to the side and lay down on the bed, facing the tank.

Waiting.

The bluish light of the Force ghost blurred the lights of the tank, and Lyric refocused her eyes to see which of her dead Jedi had come to bother her tonight. It was Anakin again, and he wanted to give her something. It looked like a knobby silver and black baton.

"Where did this come from?"

Anakin looked sheepish. "My grandson has several antique light sabers in his collection, including one that was used by a friend of mine. I don't think Qui-Gon will mind your using it for now. Seems fitting that you should use it to fight Dooku's so called heir."

The empty saber pulled her in, as the Kyber around her neck called to her by name, or so it seems. When she put her hand on it to pick it up, she had a vision of herself piloting a shuttle under heavy fire, then following two men in a battle, one the Ben Kenobi she had met. The other she heard Ben call Qui-Gon, though she didn't know the name. Her education never included Jedi history.

"Do you know how it works?" Anakin's voice was cool. He spoke to her yet looked at Armitage's body the entire time. "This one is missing its power cell."

"The Kyber." Lyric confirmed.

"Yes. The one around your neck would be the easiest, but first we need to know if you can even fight. I've seen you fly. Nice job on Yavin 4 by the way. I could have made it, but that was back in the day. The question is can you go after someone before they can come after you?"

"That's going to be hard to practice. How am I supposed to explain a saber to the First Order? I'm a dancer."

"You're an actress who's strong with the Force. Use the Knights. They know your secret and they were instructed in all Jedi forms while still training with my son, Luke. Even if you can only swing the damn thing without cutting off your own arm, it might be the thing that changes the tide of your struggle. Start embracing what you have. The Force is part of you, it lifts and carries you in ways other can't imagine. Use it."

Anakin showed her how to open the casing and insert the Kyber in the chamber. She closed her eyes and meditated on the circuity, testing to make sure her crystal wouldn't be damaged when she turned on the antique saber. Closing the hilt, she took a deep breath and flipped the switch.

A warm amber blade extended from the saber. Lyric met Anakin's gaze and they smiled at each other. Slowly the ghost faded out, leaving her alone with the golden light saber. She clicked the saber off, sticking it under her pillow for safe keeping.

Then she returned to waiting.
Chapter Thirteen

Hours stretched into days, and days into a week and still Armitage was quiet. The doctors all assured her this was normal from the loss of blood and the concussion but the silence was driving her mad. Each morning she made her way to her bedroom to feed Sloan, shower, catch up on emails, and conference with Poe, Phasma, and Kez Marab.

Her concession to having him around was that they were never to be alone. An uneasy truce existed only because she refused to allow them to use anger in her presence. If they wanted to fight, she'd given them permission to go to the gym and do their best to kill each other. She had no time for macho posturing. The men soon learned to express their own opinions when asked for advice. Lyric already knew her own mind and was only looking for either vindication or forgiveness.

Paden and Marcus assured her they were still in touch with Kylo Ren, and the tactical team was deep in the process of infiltrating the Followers. Silence would be the norm until they were successful, unless something were to go wrong. Lyric simply refused to think anything would go wrong. She kept her distance from Kylo, though she knew he was monitoring her situation, not wanting him to worry on her behalf.

She'd managed to keep the 'old dragons', as Kez called the generals on Hux's council in hand by refusing to discuss war or retribution until the Supreme Leader's situation was stable. In no way would she declare a war or risk an incursion while there was still a threat to the Core planets. Instead she'd asked for realistic defense plans for those same planets, asking them to assume an attack from the Followers as imminent. It was keeping them busy and out of her hair.

For two hours every afternoon, she trained with Paden and Marcus in the Jedi training center. When she'd presented them the light saber and told them Anakin Skywalker gave it to her from Kylo's collection, both had fallen to their knees and sworn to her secret. Her body was covered with bruises and dull burns, but both insisted she was slowly improving.

Nights were spent lying on a rollaway bed, staring at a bacta tank listening for any faint whisper from the person she needed most. She watched as tissue grew, skin mended, bones healed, but when she searched his head for him, there was nothing. Sleeplessness became a way of life, and more than once she found herself dreaming with her eyes wide open.

The afternoon of the eighth day after training, she returned to her apartment to shower and change clothes. Poe had assured her Kez was on duty, and Paden and Marcus were watching out for her as well. She stood under the streaming water, remembering the times Armitage had snuck up on her, pulling her to his chest as he'd taken control of her senses. Closing her eyes, she allowed herself to be pulling into a wakeful sleep.
The feeling of arms around her brought her out of her stupor with a quick Force punch, only to discover no one there. The phantom feeling of a stranger's arms around her raised her shields and her ire together. Quickly washing her hair, she finished in the shower and grabbed a towel to wrap her body within.

She searched the entire apartment, but there was no there. Dressing in black pants and an old sweater of Hux's, she pulled on moccasins, combed out her hair and swiftly returned to the medical center.

When she entered the room, she found the doctor and several medics reading over his life signs. She gasped with fear, her hand closing around the amber Kyber, again at her throat. For just a moment she could swear the stone was warmer than it had been in a week. The medics saw her and quickly pulled up a chair before she could fall out from fear.

"Calm down, Lady Hux. We were looking at his brain wave activity and he is definitely showing signs of raising toward consciousness. We want to move him from the tank into a recovery bay, if that's alright with you."

Too choked to trust speaking, she simply nodded then moved out of the way so they could work. It took time, and she held Armitage's stone in her hands, meditating on her love for him and how much she wanted him to awaken and tell her everything was going to be okay. As they removed him from the tank, taking care to mind his new skin, Lyric felt a small jolt through her hand.

The medics washed the bacta residue from his skin, removing the feeding tubes and various other monitors he wouldn't need outside the tank. Put a light gown over his arms mindful of the catheter and heart monitors while not bothering the baby pink skin on his chest. It seemed forever before they began to leave after completing each portion of the transfer.

Finally everyone left, leaving her and Hux alone in the recovery rooms. Warm blankets wrapped around his body and a light red beard graced his jaws. Reaching out with the Force, she could almost feel him. His collar was in her pack, where it had been since the shooting. Inserting the jewel back into the clasp, she leaned over and fastened it around his neck.

Almost immediately she was pelted with his emotions: fear, worry, anger, pain. She tried to address them one by one now that he could hear her voice.

"Armitage, it's all right. I'm here and you're going to be all right. We got the men who did this to you. Sloan, Bella, and I are all fine, so don't worry. You were shot, you've been in a tank for a little more than one week. Everything's going to be alright."

She took his hand, his fingers so warm after the frigid bacta. He squeezed lightly to let her know he understood. Taking great care not to bother any of his lines, Lyric pressed herself against his hand, allowing her love for him to sweep through her frame and into his. The color began to return to his skin, and his breathing eased from her touch.

Once she determined he'd fallen into a restful sleep, she closed her own eyes for the first time in almost a week. The missing gear in her brain was stuttering, but slowly coming back up to speed and she could breathe. She dropped into a deep, dreamless state, exhaustion catching up at last.

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Hux could hear voices, but he wasn't sure whose. There were several voices, and they appeared to be arguing with Lyric, in low urgent tones. He tried to concentrate on what they said.
Phasma's was the first he recognized. "Lady Hux, 'Vindicator' is coming off the line tomorrow and the Field Marshall had scheduled himself to oversee the shake-down cruise. Shall we send them on to Serenno as back up for the Supreme Leader, or hold her here until Lord Hux awakens and is deemed well enough to travel?"

Lyric's dulcet voice warmed his ears. "Do we know if Lord Ren even needs back-up at this point? It was my understand they had just begun the incursion into the Followers. Marcus? Paden?"

"Both Knights are overseeing Lady Bella and Sloan returning to the apartments. We'll have to wait until they arrive to see what's up on Serenno." The man voice sounded almost familiar, but he couldn't focus well enough to put a name to the voice.

"Phasma has the base tight, and we've completed the sweeps through most of the targeted districts. I believe we'll all be okay until Dooku figures out I'm not going to come running to Serenno to negotiate." Lyric sounded exhausted. She needed his strength. "Let's hold 'Vindicator' for now. Armitage should be ready for this in a week."

Unfortunately, Hux felt like a fighter engine had been dropped on his chest. He remembered the point blank shot to the chest and assumed that was the source of his agony. Searching his memories, he recalled Lyric saying it had been over a week. A week in which the universe could have imploded and he would be ignorant. He tried to focus his feelings, to catch her attention.

"Can we continue this discussion later, gentlemen? I'd really like some time to rest before the next emergency catches me."

"You can have two hours, then you have dinner with the chairman of the Galactic Industries armaments division. They want to bid on certain weapon programs, and Hux scheduled this dinner months ago. We can't cancel, but we can make it turn in your favor. I'll need one of your Knights to help me, but..."

"Go. Tell Paden you've already spoken with me. We need as many happy players as we can get until everyone returns from their respective journeys."

"Your wish is my command, cousin."

Cousin? Did that mean Dameron was helping Lyric run the First Order? Well that was a disaster to think about. Of course, it made perfect sense. Lyric had no idea who she could trust with Ren gone and Hux shot. Dameron would have her back if nothing else, and she needed that. But did having Dameron on her side mean that Marab was there too?

Damn that smuggler, he was slippery. How had he managed to survive as a lieutenant in the First Order and a known traitor? First chance he got, Hux was going to requisition Marab's folder and find out what was the true story of the pain in his ass. Then he was going to build a new holding cell under Coruscant and cement the bastard inside.

He heard the sounds of people leaving, the door opening and closing several times. When he concentrated he could smell Lyric's perfume, and he felt the warmth of his collar and Kyber crystal on his skin. From the noise in the room, she was seated beside the bed, typing furiously on a datapad.

Hux was content to listen to the sounds of her breathing, but he wondered why Sloan was missing and why Lyric was alone? Where was her security detail? After a selfish moment enjoying the quiet of the room, he began to struggle to open his eyes.
He couldn't focus on anything, except the fuzzy figure of a woman sitting in a chair beside him. With a guess, he raised his arm to stroke her hair. Her eyes closed and a smile appeared on her blurry features.

"Welcome back husband."

"How long?" He could hear the roughness in his voice, caused by the tube they had only recently pulled from his stomach.

"Eight days."

Nodding, he pulled her arm toward him, frowning when she pulled back.

"No darling, the left side is where the worst damage is. Let me move around to your good side."

She disappeared from his frame of view and it scared him.

"Lyric?"

"Here." She grabbed his right hand and laid it against her cheek. "I'm glad to see you awake. I've been so scared. You've never even had a cold before this."

"True," he murmured. "But I wasn't prepared for this. So much is going on right now."

"I know, and I think I've got everything under control. The peace accords are being signed in systems throughout the galaxy. Money and recruits are already arriving, especially from the Inner Core. Ren and several of the Knight have managed to infiltrate the Followers on Serenno and we are monitoring the situation through the Force. Rey is still on Naboo but feeling much better and finally gaining some weight. The doctors don't want her to leave but can no longer forcibly ground her."

"'Vindicator' leaves the shipyard tomorrow and will be ready for her shakedown cruise once we decide who, when, and where. The council is busy working on defense plans for the dense, Inner Core planets, which is keeping your gun happy council very happy indeed. There are rumbles from the Followers of a major offensive against the Core, but we are still listening for specifics. Poe and the Resistance are assisting in the process of following these rumors."

"Well, I should get shot more often. Apparently, you are quite the administrator."

"No, I fake well. I've been using Phasma and Poe to enforce my decisions to both sides and attempting to sleep whenever I can. Marcus Ren has been keeping watch over Bella and Sloan, while Paden Ren shadows me wherever I go. Without them, the vultures would have landed about ten minutes after you were shot."

She peered at him with teary eyes. "There was nothing, nothing in my mind, no warmth from your crystal, it was as if you'd stepped off the edge of the universe. Sloan and I both shrieked, which brought out the guard, that's how they found you. The quick reaction saved your life."

"Did Sloan feel the pain too?"

Shaking her head, she wiped at her tears, trying to calm herself. He wanted nothing more than to pull her tight to him but was certainly in no position to move yet. It was still an effort to breathe. She stared at him as if she expected him to disappear, for the silence to creep up again. He felt horrible, and extremely irate that she'd been thrown into this position.
"Can you give me a summary?"

"They were from Atollon. Same as the people who attacked me. Ren and five of his Knights have infiltrated the Followers, Marcus and Paden are monitoring the situation. We've rounded up seven members of the group over the past week. Most are still waiting for either Captain Phasma to get to them, or for myself to read them."

"You look exhausted."

Lyric smiled, a brief flash of sunshine in the dark of the recovery bay. "I think I'll sleep better tonight."

"How's Sloan?"

"Good. Missing his father, but overall good. He's ready to start crawling, which means nothing will be safe again."

Hux smiled. "I miss him so much."

"He's already asleep or I would have Bella bring him over."

"I can wait until tomorrow. Tonight, I have you all to myself."

She slid onto the bed on his right side, pulling his arm across her shoulder. "Don't ever scare me like this again, Armitage."

"I promise," he whispered as she snuggled next to him. Hux felt her reaching out for him through their connection, and he grasp her thoughts like a drowning man reacting to help. She wrapped her leg around his, as if she couldn't get close enough.

They slept in perfect dreamless harmony for almost ten hours.

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None of the medics were happy to see Lyric perched on the side of the bed sharing a datapad with the Field Marshall, trying to catch him up on a week's worth of business. The doctor managed to get her to promise to leave for the day, so that Hux would get some peace and quiet. No one realized however, how little patience Hux had for rest.

Four hours after she left, Phasma received two phone calls, one from the medical center asking for a uniform for him, and one from the medics asking for Lyric to return to calm Hux down. Wisely she sent Lyric first who found her husband in a borrowed pair of surgical pants, pacing around the bed, impatiently waiting for clothes to be delivered.

"What are you doing?" the anger in her voice was laced with fatigue.

"Trying to get dressed and get out of here so I can take this off your shoulders."

"My shoulders are fine. You should be in bed."

"How can I rest with everything that is going on? You need my help."

Lyric stared at him, and he noticed for the first time the deep circles under her eyes. He wondered the last time she slept before last night, realizing earlier when he noticed the bed and desk that she'd been living in his sick room for eight days. He swallowed hard against his raging pride, against the faint whispering poison of Snoke and Brendol, and sat back down on the bed.
"But you need to rest too, my love." He tried his best to look calm, though he knew it was a lost cause. He could feel the blood running through his veins he was so jacked up from lack of movement.

She smiled and took his hand. "I know you aren't happy, but I need you well, not lame. Stay here, at least one more day, and I will shut up and bring you a clean uniform. Please, take care of yourself because I can't go through that again."

"One more day from now or from when I was removed from the tank?"

Rolling her eyes, she relented. "I have a meeting with the new captain of 'Vindicator' in a few hours. If you promise to behave, I'll come by after that and take you home. Phasma can bring you a clean uniform."

His smile was wide. "May I go with you to the meeting?"
Never Underestimate Stupid

Chapter Summary

Kez Marab learns an interesting secret.

Chapter Fourteen

Marab stood in the shadows, watching several Storm troopers guarding the entrance to the palace. Four days he'd been off planet on assignment and the world changed while he was gone. He'd heard that Hux awakened, and the men who shot him were to be executed next week. The worse news he'd heard was about Lyric was disappearing somewhere for two hours every afternoon, with only the Knights of Ren with her, and that when she returned she was always worn out and sweaty. Poe swore he had no knowledge of what she was doing but did confirm the two Knights were part of her security team and went with her everywhere. It made Marab's skin crawl when he saw them with her.

To his mind, there was only one thing that would take Lyric away from her husband's side, but two hours wasn't enough time to fly anywhere off of Coruscant. That just left another reason but he refused to entertain that dark thought. That thought brought his blood to flame, and his nightmares soon became lurid fantasies of Lyric with the two, black masked and cloaked Knights performing all manner of perversions. Unable to take it any longer, next afternoon off he used the tunnel map he'd been composing and followed the three of them to the Jedi training room, in the bowels of the Imperial palace. From deep in the shadows, he saw her strip off the dress and heels to reveal a breast binding and gym shorts underneath, along with a patchwork of bruises and burns.

"All right boys, who's turn is it to go first this time?" Lyric's voice sounded so young and carefree, and when she removed the amber crystal from her collar and inserted it into a silver baton, Marab almost shit himself. His lover was a Jedi? How the fuck did he not know she was a Jedi? When the blade clicked on, the golden light was the exact shade of amber as her eyes.

Sure enough, the Knights took turns trying to beat the living hell out of her, and it took every ounce of his strength to not burst out into the room and defend her. Not that she needed defending, she was doing well at holding her own, until they teamed up against her, one from each direction. For several minutes he held his breath as she tried to beat back both, finally catching a saber directly across her stomach, hissing loudly at the sizzling burn. Unable to withhold any longer, Marab stepped out into the room.

"Gentlemen, two on one is only fun when weapons aren't involved."

Marab had always heard the Knights were unfair fighters, and now he could stamp true to that statement. The taller man Force thrust him against the far wall, while the shorter man moved to protect Lyric. Then Marab was allowed to slam face-first down to the floor, while Lyric approached him, golden light saber blazing.

"What the hell are you doing here Kez?"
"I followed you, to see where you were disappearing every afternoon. Rumors are running wild around the base about you and two Knights of Ren disappearing for hours at a time. I wanted to find out what you were doing."

She thumbed off the saber then tossed it to the shorter Knight. "If I thought it was any of your business, then I would have told you about."

She held out her hand to help him up. Once on his feet, he took in the many bruises and burns over her torso, arms and legs. "You look like they've been beating the hell out of you."

The taller Knight laughed. "Trust me, she gives as good as she gets."

Lyric frowned, "Paden Ren, Marcus Ren – allow me to formally introduce Lt. Kez Marab, part-time First Order intelligence officer, full time rogue."

Marab took her hand, "What are you doing? Light sabers aren't the easiest weapons to learn."

She glanced at her guards. "Could we have a moment, gentlemen?"

Marab felt the cold glances both men raked over him and wondered what they knew and how long they had been her security detail. He'd never seen them near her, so they must be excellent at their job. They would only withdraw to the far door, keeping an eye on their charge. He pulled her closer, so they could talk without being overheard.

"I'm learning to defend myself and my family. The connection I have with the Kyber in my necklace powers the saber, which I borrowed from Kylo. Paden and Marcus have been helping me learn the forms and to be aggressive. It helps fill my days."

He ran his fingertips over the burns on her upper arms, taking note of her wince of pain. Pulling her closer, he whispered, "It's torture to look at you. I can't believe you've put yourself through this. Can't you just use a blaster, like us non-Force sensitives?"

"No, this works for me. I can't explain it but it's like flying. A means of pushing past my boundaries and being more."

"Can't you do that without using actual sabers?"

Her smile was sunshine in the dank training room. "Where's the fun in that?"

Marab smiled back, happy she wasn't having a strange three-some behind his back. While he had no qualms about sleeping with a married woman, he felt possessiveness and a sense of raw anger at the thought of anyone else touching her, even her own husband. Since that horrid day above Dagobah, his ears were constantly filled with the sound of Hux clicking those chains around her. While he couldn't keep her safe from Hux, he could try to keep her safe from herself.

"I want to kiss you so bad," he murmured, one hand wiping sweaty hair off her forehead. "But I have a feeling your security team would break my face."

"More than likely yes, they would. You heard Armitage is awake?"

"I did. Is he alright?"

"Sore. Tired. Furious. We leave on 'Vindicator' soon."

"Don't remind me. I'm still trying to get on board."
She frowned. "Do you really think that's a good idea?"

"Better than me stuck here going out of my mind wondering what's going on. I've got almost all the buy-in for orders to be cut. If I have to fake a few signatures, then I will. I've certainly done worse for less reason."

"I have to go, Kez."

"Spar with me tomorrow."

"What?"

"Let me be the punching bag. I have no idea how to use a light saber. I'd rather see those burns on me than on you. Teach me."

"I don't think that's a good idea, Kez. Armitage would be livid."

"What he doesn't know..."

"The Knights tell him everything. Everything."

He understood what she was saying. Soon Hux would know Marab was making his way around the palace, stalking Lyric, watching her sleep, watching her son grow. Well, if he was going down, he was going to enjoy the fall. He pulled her closer, wrapped his arms around her, and kissed her like it was the last day of his life. His lips demanded and she gave him everything, and for a moment he swore he could see colors.

The explosion of a training baton meeting the side of his head dropped him to his knees. With double-vision he tried to focus on the many black-clad Knights in the room. One bent down, close to his face. Both of its heads shook at him.

"You sure are a certain brand of stupid, aren't you Marab?"

"Which one of you is asking?"

The last thing he remembered was Lyric calling his name.
Chapter Summary

The Hux family leaves Coruscant for the Outer Rim.

Chapter Fifteen

Hux was going over his office one last time, making sure everything he needed for the duty assignment on 'Vindicator' had already been sent over. His last meeting had been with the Knights assigned to Lyric's security team. They had several interesting stories to tell him concerning his wife and light saber training, and an even more interesting one concerning Kez Marab and a map showing secret passages in the palace, including detailed directions to his wife in various rooms around the family quarters.

This time he had Marab by the short hairs. Currently cooling his heels in the Imperial dungeons, orders had been issued to make sure he wasn't conscious until 'Vindicator' was well out of system. His security clearances had been revoked and a court martial would be convened to schedule the man's execution. There was no genie to pull him out of this bottle, and Hux would sleep better knowing the man was finally gone.

Lyric and Sloan were already safely installed on 'Vindicator', along with the nanny. Bella was returning to Arkanis to make sure the planet was well enforced against any possible incursion by the Followers. The two women cried copious amounts of tears, but deep inside Hux was glad to see his sister go home. If things went as he suspected during this cruise, battle stations may be more common than not. It already terrified him to have his wife and son with him, but there was no way in hell he would leave them behind.

Phasma accompanied him on the shuttle to the destroyer.

"Captain, you spent time with Lyric during my recuperation. What is your opinion of her actions?"

"Permission to speak freely sir?"

"Of course."

"While I still think she's a better dancer than Field Marshall, she did manage to control those old dragons on your council. I wasn't too keen on having Commander Dameron around all the time, but the two of them did drag the rest of the Resistance into an accord with the First Order over this True Jedi business. There's more peace and cooperation in the galaxy than at any time in my memory, and the First Order is stable and secure, especially in the Inner Core."

Smiling, Hux replied. "I hear the unspoken but..."

"Her willingness to talk with the smuggler Marab distracts her. I don't know what hold that man has over her, but any time he appears she's willing to stop what she's doing and speak with him. True he has had some good intel on the Followers, but at what price?"
"What happens when they are together?"

"He pulls her off to one side, obviously trying to get her in private. They talk seriously for a few minutes. Then he'll try to pull her closer. Most of the time, she stays well out of arms reach, but when she's extremely tired, she'll let him hug her tight. He tries to kiss her, and we know how that usually ends. His affection is obvious, he wears his heart on his sleeve for her. It's harder to understand her emotions."

"Explain." While he was dying a little inside, he wanted to know where this man stood in Lyric's eyes. Why she kept meeting the man when she professed to loathe him.

"As I said, most times she keeps him at arms-length. Literally, her hand against his chest to keep him apart. She looks him straight in the eyes and there is no deeper emotion on her face than interest in the intel. No matter how much he might reach for more, she stands firm and professional.

"But then there are those times, few granted and usually when she's so tired she can't see straight, that's when the shields drop and you can see the truth. She lusts for him. It's not love, it's purely physical. It's not a primal thing for her like it is for him. For Lady Hux, she sees it as weakness, a character defect. One she works hard, and successfully to avoid."

"Thank you Phasma." He stared out the shuttle window as the planet fell away beneath them. The steel band around his chest with Marab's name disappeared with a resounding poof. Lust he could work with. Lust he could understand. Love, he knew, would always triumph in the end over lust and the one thing he didn't doubt was her love.

The rest of the trip to the dock was quiet, Hux lost in thoughts of the mission ahead. According to the Knights, Kylo wanted the fleet near enough to threaten Serenno but not until the precise moment. Hux's most pressing problem was how to keep his determined wife from sneaking a TIE fighter and joining the fight. She'd already spoke with the captain of the command over possibly getting some flight time before arriving in the Outer Rim.

That reminded him of the light saber. She hadn't hidden it from him. Instead she was quite proud of her early successes and the two Knights had assured him she could hold her own long enough for either Ren, one of the Knights, or himself to extricate her from a determined attacker. When she'd thumbed on that golden beam, part of him screamed in terror for fear of her overestimating her abilities.

But then he'd watched her spar with Marcus Ren, and again was struck with her Force driven movements. She'd had the damn thing less than a week, still wouldn't confess to him where she got it, but already she moved as fluidly as either of her opponents. It made him proud, how his girl could adapt to any change thrown her way.

As they neared the hanger bay on 'Vindicator', Hux felt the old hunger growing deep inside. He was hunting again, this time to save his family. A subtle change came over his features as they hardened, sharpening his senses and realigning his inner compass. When the shuttle touched down, he could see Lyric, dressed in a First Order uniform modified for her status as his wife. She carried Sloan, also dressed in First Order black, and clapping his hands in delight as the large black shuttle touched down, wings folding up as they locked down to the deck.

He was at the door as the airlock cycled and greeted as befitted his rank. Troopers stood in ordered ranks, officers at the front for his inspection. He moved along, speaking with officers here and there along the receiving line but he only had eyes for Lyric.
Gods how beautiful she was, here on his ship. It was on a ship they'd been reunited, and now it was on a ship they would start their voyage as a family. He reached her side and gently kissed her cheek, taking Sloan himself. His left side was still tender yet holding the boy on his right side felt off. Sloan wrapped his arms around his father's neck and Hux felt another chunk of his heart slide into place. While he'd enjoyed the past year on Coruscant, this was where he belonged.

After the speeches and dedications, everyone was dismissed and he left for the officer's reception. There he and Lyric were introduced to each officer and their assignment on the ship. She flowed through the room like water, and he caught more than one man's eye following her around. They stayed for quite some time, leaving only when Sloan became cranky and irritable.

Their quarters were enormous compared to the ones on 'Punisher' and soon the baby was happily nursing in the rooms assigned to him and the nanny. Hux settled into his new office but returned to the bridge for the official cast-off and departure. It was a lengthy process, but everything went smooth and once the star field was glowing past the windows, he returned the con to the ship's captain and went to their rooms.

She was waiting for him, clad in a thin black nightgown, eyes demur as he placed his gloves and hat on the table beside the door. When he put one finger under her chin, she rose delicately from the floor to stand before him.

"Are you happy, my love?" His eyes searched hers for any resentment. On a ship, he knew her instinct to run often took strange turns. The doctors had told him to keep alert for the usual signs of trouble and to make sure she had plenty of light.

"Of course, I am."

"What does Marab do for you that I do not, or cannot?"

She froze, unable to decide if he was serious. He slid his arm around her neck, holding her still as he searched her eyes. He knew there was hurt in his own, he couldn't help it. But he also sent her love, to let her know whatever she said would be forgiven.

"Armitage, I don't think..."

"No, please. I'm asking a serious question because the unknown is driving me crazy fantasizing what happened. Is he more attentive as a lover, does he do things you wish I would do? What hold does he have on you that I can't compare to?"

"He's a fantastic kisser. That's really about it."

"That's it? He's not hung like a god? He's not got the stamina of a teenage? He's just a great kisser?"

"Husband," she grabbed his head and stared him directly in the eyes, "You opened this bottle, now I'm going to cork it once and for all. I did not make the decision to break our vows lightly, and only with the knowledge you had done so first. Yes, I slept with Kez, more than once yet less than five times, none since my return to you before Sloan's birth. Not because of any great love or passion for him, but to hurt you as badly as I was hurting. I did not know how physically ill I was at the time, but I knew I had to do something extreme to catch your attention. Little did I know that my anger would create a monster.

"But if you want to raw truth of things Armitage, you are by far the more talented, passionate, and endowed of the two men I have slept with. I continue to speak with Kez now because it seems"
pointless to ignore a man who’s seen me naked and pregnant, and the intel he's gathered on the Followers has been valuable. But I have no need to continue any physical relationship with him."

Hux loosened his hold on her neck and pulled her close, her arms round his waist while their lips met. Breaking for a moment, he whispered to her, "Show me."

Tentative at first, she began at his jawline, right where the ear and face met. Softly, like the flutter of a warm breeze, she kissed him and moved slowly down to the hollow of his throat and back up the other side. Then her lips pressed softly to his, asking for permission, which he readily gave. Taking his bottom lip in her teeth, she sucked it into her mouth, pulsing the pressure as if it were a different part of her body while her eyes gleamed with an inner fire. He moaned and ground his cock against her as she grabbed his tongue and repeated the sensation.

It felt as if she were pulling from his tongue straight to his cock, and it was all he could do to not throw her over the sofa and slam himself into her. But he'd asked her to show him and he'd be damned before he quit early. The demons in his head had driven his fury against Marab to such a frenzy he'd actually asked to be shown how the smuggler made love to his wife. Knowledge was power, and perhaps this would put the demons to rest. If not it would surely send him over the edge.

Pushing him gently onto the sofa, she removed his uniform, kissing him with those soft warm bites driving him mad, moving downward as she removed his shirt. When his t-shirt came off, she gazed closely at the new skin, still raw and covered with a bacta pack. Her fingertips left trails of heat on the newly formed skin, making his cock ache even more. Leaving the left side otherwise alone, she grazed his right nipple with her teeth, before licking a thin line from neck to groin and removing his pants.

He toed his boots off and kicked them to the floor as she pushed his clothes down, freeing his already hard cock. Using her soft mouth, she gently worked the soft knot on the underside, each press on the nerve sending a jolt straight to his balls. Taking the sac in her hand, she sank her mouth down until she had every inch of him inside, and he saw nothing but fireworks as she pulled back, using just the edge of her teeth to drag across the velvet skin.

"Lyric," he whispered her name, crushing his fingers into her silky soft hair.

She laughed, the rumble against his cock as she took him deep again tightening his sac in her hand. Continuing her assault on his senses, she used one hand to run her nails along the insides of his thighs, raising a fire in his groin he couldn't deny.

"Stop," he commanded.

Obediently she pulled off him with a loud pop. Her eyes were teasing as she gazed at him from under those dark lashes and gleamed like a cat toying with its prey.

Pulling her up, she straddled his hips, the heat from her searing his cock as it reached upward. Steadying himself with one hand, he bit his lip as she sank down until there was nothing between them. He ran his hands lightly over her sides, starting at the hip and upward to thumb her nipples with each pass.

With the grace of a dancer she rolled her hips against his, moaning loudly as she chased her own high. She braced herself on his arms to avoid pressure on his still healing chest and as he gazed up at her, he found himself falling in love with her again. Over and over she had given him everything, and he doubted the accounts were anywhere close to equal. That she was willing to raise their son in space because of his work was just one example of how she constantly gave over to him.
She wriggled her hips and with a cry shuddered and rolled through her orgasm, and as he looked at
the beauty in her face, he found himself spilling deep inside. Returning to his gaze, she started to
slip off but he grabbed her wrist, pulling her down to the sofa beside him.

He stared deep into those amber cat eyes, unsure if he could put all his feelings into words alone. It
was as if they were on the edge of something big, and if he said the wrong the word the moment
would pass unfulfilled.

"I..."

She put her finger against his lips. The smile on her face was shy, almost innocent, and he felt his
heart flip deeper into hers. She moved her hand down to the amber clasp on his collar.

"I know, Armi. I really do know."

She melted against his skin, as they lay on the sofa for a while, content to simply watch the white
star field slide past the windows as their bodies tangled and sighed in mutual happiness. When she
fell asleep, he slid out from under and padded to the bedroom. After slipping on a pair of sleeping
pants, he pulled Lyric into his arms and carried her to bed.

Unable to sleep, he lay with her in his arms, watching as her chest rose and fell with every breath.
For the first time in a year, the shadow of Kez Marab no longer lay between him and his wife.
Instead, Hux began to prepare for the true danger, Dooku and the Followers. He pulled Lyric
closer and lay his head beside her neck.

The two Kybers blinked in recognition of each other and after a moment, a feeling of lethargy
swept over him.

'Sleep my husband,' he heard Lyric murmur inside his head.
Chapter Summary

Lyric breaks the most fundamental rule on 'Vindicator', and Marab's true colors finally show.

Chapter Sixteen

Hux stood on the bridge watching squadron after squadron of TIE fighters run through training drills as 'Vindicator' worked her way through the various requirements of the maiden voyage shakedown. Five months they'd been in space, and the worst issue the massive new destroyer had experienced was irregularities with the lifts. So far, he hadn't been able to think of an excuse to give explaining his wife playing with her newfound abilities. Or the sudden explosion of cameras in a certain training room he'd marked for his personal use only.

As he watched, out of the corner of his eye, he noticed another squad leaving the hanger deck as one landed. The newest group took their place in the drills, working their way through the various exercises. His eyes narrowed as he observed their movements.

"Which squadron just came out?" His question was directed to the lieutenant running the comms board on the bridge.

"That would be Captain Torega, Field Marshall. Highest ranking, confirmed aces only."

Hux nodded and returned his attention to the window. He knew Torega, a regular Academy tactician, he was a veteran of several First Order campaigns, and a strict taskmaster. With a smile, he told the lieutenant, "Open a private channel to the captain for me."

"Available now, sir."

"Torega", the sound of the man's voice through the flight helmet bore that vague vocoder effect.

"Captain, are you enjoying yourself today?"

"Come again, Field Marshall?" The man's voice was smooth, he had to give him that. He wasn't panicking over his situation. That would make this even more fun.

"Torega, did you really think she could sneak out with your squad and I wouldn't notice?"

"Sorry sir, but she's a regular solar storm when she wants to get her way. I promise sir, no one will get close enough to tag on her. She's outside formation, running shadow."

Hux broke into laughter, the bridge around smiling with him. "You obviously haven't noticed your 'shadow' is currently pulling two gee being pursued by three of your opponents and making them look like untrained droids."

"Fuck!"
The cut-off switch toggled open and he could hear the captain screaming at his rogue TIE pilot, "My lady, on your ass! Three is way too many."

The sound filled the bridge as he heard his wife respond testily, "There were four, what are you complaining about?"

A collective chuckled worked its way around the room, Hux shaking his head in disbelief. How many times had she snuck out there he didn't see her? Probably more than a few. He was already running in his mind what her punishment would be for breaking his most fundamental rule – no flying without his permission. He found himself growing hard in anticipation of their reunion.

As Captain Torega ripped his wayward pilot a new one for breaking formation, Hux turned on his heel and informed the officer on duty, "You have the conn, I'll be in my quarters for the afternoon."

"Yes, Field Marshall."

Making his way to the hanger deck, he kept his emotions masked and closed, just as he sensed she was doing. That was how she'd snuck past him, closing herself off from him by slowly covering her thoughts until he'd felt the sudden sexual rush Lyric always experienced when flying. He hit the deck and found her two Knights standing near the flight command center, both looking extremely miserable.

"What happened this time?" He wanted to laugh at the expression two of the most fearsome assassins in the galaxy wore on their faces.

"She used Jedi mind training to lead us away from the hanger, then doubled back and out she went. I knew she was up to something. Her Force signature was all over the place this morning." Paden Ren looked crestfallen at his failure.

Hux nodded. "This has been coming on for a while. I'd noticed the distraction, the staring out into space and sighing heavily. I thought perhaps she'd pass through it without acting out, because of Sloan. Obviously, we all underestimated how restless she is. Don't blame yourselves on this one, we all failed here."

The squadron soon returned for the day, and Hux stood beside the hanger central command center, watching them exit their machines, laughter and the sense of a unit strong with these men who'd trained together since old enough to fly. How had Lyric managed to insinuate herself into their tight knit family?

She climbed out, helmet coming off to reveal the mass of black curls that was hers alone. Captain Torega and the others clustered around her fighter, helping her down then clapping loudly, along with a few wolf calls. He tuned his ears to their conversation as he approached.

"I know you've probably heard this before, but gods my lady, can you fly."

She blushed bright red. "Thank you Captain, gentlemen. It was a true honor to fly with you, and I hope, if I'm not grounded for the rest of my life, to do so again. This was the most fun I've had in a long time. Thank you all."

They dispersed and she walked toward the exit. Only then did he move to block her escape.

She had the goodness of heart to look ashamed, but her face's expression was the same as that day above Dagobah. Pure exhilaration with a deeply sexual component.

"I see I am discovered."
He pulled his amusement back enough to look angry. "You've broken the rules, my love. There's only one punishment on this ship for people who violate my commands, go behind my back and subvert my officers and pilots. Take First Order property for their own purposes. What do you suppose that punishment contains?"

"Am I to be taken to a holding cell in chains, to await your decision on my life?"

"As attractive as that sounds, actually I intend to see to your punishment immediately, if you have nothing else on your schedule this afternoon?"

"Nothing, sir."

Her smile was pure sunshine in the darkness of space, and he took her arm to guide her to their quarters. His fingers were light against her flight suit and she leaned into him, both of them eager to reach the privacy of their bedroom.

"Where is our son?" He murmured as they passed through the busy hallways of the ship.

"It's his afternoon nap time. The nanny will take care of him for another three hours."

It took all his training to keep the smile off his face.

*****

Kez Marab wasn't sure how long he'd been in the cells below Coruscant, but he knew it was longer than he'd ever been held by any detention center. The bones in his hands had been broken, along with his nose and right leg. Several times. Of course, if he hadn't tried to escape seven times, he probably wouldn't have received the ass-kicking Hux ordered after each escape attempt.

They were patching him up after each time. Couldn't have him go dying before Hux was ready to kill him publicly. All things considered he was probably in better shape now than when out on his own, but the scars told a different story. He wondered if he would be able to recognize himself if he were to see his face.

Most of his thoughts centered around Lyric. Where she was, who she might be with, was she all right, was the baby okay, had they stopped Dooku yet – these and more questions that he'd thought possible occupied the majority of his free time. Ignorance was not bliss, and every moment spent not knowing ramped his anxiety up another level. Even sleep offered him no relief from the worry.

His dreams were often filled with lurid images that woke him sweaty and panicked. Images of her chained to Hux's bed as he and the Knights beat her with light sabers and batons, of her flying pursued by unknown attackers through foreign skies, of her writhing beneath him as blood poured from her body, and Marab was certain his mind had finally snapped.

"You look like fried bantha shit," came an unexpected voice from outside his door.

"Well, pardon my appearance but the personal valet is off duty this year. How long have I been here?"

"You really want to know?"

He nodded, ready for anything.

"Six months."
Holy shit. He hadn't been ready for that. Four, maybe five tops, but six? The entire universe could have ended while he was holed up by Hux.

"What's the news?"

"Lyric Hux is coming to Coruscant on her way to Naboo to attend the birth of Lord Ren's child. She and her son will be arriving in two days. The liner will be here for an additional two days in order for refueling and supplies, then head out to Naboo. Eventually they will collect Lady Rey and her daughter and escort them to the fleet."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because you're going to get onto that ship and go with her."

Marab laughed bitterly. "And these bars are just going to disappear, and magically I'll be past thousands of troopers all with my picture tattooed inside their helmets? All my resources are gone, my clearances revoked and I've got nothing. It's a nice suggestion, but I don't see how it can work."

"We need you to bring Lyric Hux and her son to Serenno. That's what we've contracted you to do, and that's what we expect to happen. Do you still doubt my master's powers, after all that's been accomplished so far? How many times have we set you free to continue serving our cause along with your own selfish wants? You owe the Followers, Marab. And we will collect."

The man continued. "Tomorrow a new set of clothes will be delivered to you. You will then follow your messenger. The next day you will be smuggled onto the First Order liner belonging to the Huxes. Before reaching Naboo you will make yourself known to her and divert to Serenno. Landing coordinates will be sent to you upon arrival above the planet. For this service, you will receive ten times your normal contract fee, sent as usual to your account through the same channels."

"And if I don't?"

Pain unlike anything he'd ever experienced ran through his body, like fire running through his nervous system. He gasped out loud and the pain vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

"You could be stuffed into a room with endless pain for a few decades."

"You Force-sensitives can be real shitheads."

"Be ready tomorrow, Marab. There will only be a small window in which this plan will be viable."

The man left, giving Marab a chance to sink down on the small uncomfortable cot and pull himself together. Damn Jedi wannabes, always acting like the owned the fucking universe. Why he'd ever put himself under contract to them was a mystery. Probably them working some sort of voodoo on him.

But of more importance, he was going to see her again. After six months, he would see her face, hear her voice again. And she would have Sloan with her, although Marab didn't know why that made him happy and terrified all at the same time. When he'd signed the contract to abduct Lyric and give her to the Followers, no mention had been made of her son. Why did they want him now?

He slept little that night, all his senses alert for the coming attempt. It was midday when his door buzzed open and one of Sergent Tollard's supply droids entered with a clean uniform, a blaster, orders for several ships under various names, and a pocket full of credits. Quickly he donned the new outfit and made ready to make his way out.
The hallway was empty, as promised. Pulling his cap low he followed the droid to an awaiting speeder. Once on board, he noticed a pre-programmed destination, near the base yet obscure. They arrived in five minutes, and he made his way to the door. The lock keyed open to his fingerprints as always. Once inside he stripped and headed for the fresher.

The water felt like heaven after months of sonic showers and bacta baths, and he stood under the shower head and delighted in the sensation. Finally he felt clean enough to step out, towel off, start again. There were several messages on his private net, confirming when Lyric would arrive on 'Arabesque', the private family shuttle. She and Sloan would be staying in the same apartments as before and the only security detail would be those two nightmares, the Knights. Hux was staying with 'Vindicator' as his family went to assist Rey with delivery.

The Followers were still trying to start chaos in the Inner Rim but so far Dameron and the Resistance were foiling their efforts with great success. All in all, peace was gaining a foothold in the galaxy and if Marab delivered Lyric to the Followers, war would rip across the Outer Rim and into the core within weeks. It seemed he was caught again between a rock and a hard place, and Lyric was the bait.

While he waited for 'Arabesque' to arrive he checked his business holdings. Most of his investments were holding steady and had weathered his incarceration rather well. There was a message from Dameron explaining where the 'Kestrel' was docked and the code to get into the ship when he retrieved her. At least he still had her, the one prize he'd kept through thick and thin.

He lay on his bed, catching on holonet news to see what was going on while he rotted away. Not surprisingly, most of the current news was of the impending birth of Princess Padme Leia Solo, daughter of Kylo Ren and the Lady Rey of Jakku, great grand-daughter of Padme Amidala. Apparently Lyric and Sloan were headed to Naboo for the birth as Rey was in full panic mode with no one there and had demanded Hux send them to her. Kylo Ren was still entrenched with the Followers, and couldn't be extricated to physically attend, though he would be there through the Force.

There were several recent photos of Lyric, Sloan, and unfortunately Armitage, as young Sloan was taking his first steps and about to celebrate his first birthday. To say she looked lovely was an understatement. His baby ballerina was growing up and her beauty was only increasing as she aged. Hux looked his usual state of bored with life and deeply in love with his family.

Sloan was the spitting image of his father, with Lyric's coloring. His smile was as wide as her own, and the photo showed the baby's arm thrown around her neck as he completed the walk from father to mother. He looked at that one for a long time, thinking of an afternoon spent with his arms around her as she slept, feeling the feet of her child as he'd stretched inside her. At the time, he spent the hours wondering what it would be like to father a child, her child, and the happiness they could have.

He'd never wanted to be a parent until that day. Of course, he only wanted to father her children. What amazing children they could have, if only she'd find the courage to step out from the cocoon of Hux and let her own heart soar. Tell the First Order and the True Jedi scum to fuck off and fly off into the sunset with him. There were a thousand worlds they could hide on, live on, make love on, raise their own family, if only he could convince her of the true dangers of staying.

When the sun arose, he showered again, enjoying the water while he still could. The morning holo-news was full of two things: the arrival of ‘Arabesque’, and the scheduled execution of state prisoner Kez Marab. He laughed out loud. That would be one way to cover up his escape, pronounce him dead and it covered a multitude of problems.
He was dressed and on base hours prior to the arrival of the ship, checking on other connections within the First Order to see what avenues were still open to him. Throughout the months of torture, the only thing he'd truly held onto were his connections. While most were amazed to see him, only Sergeant Tollard had the guts to ask what was going on.

"You've got more lives than sense, boy. What the hell are you thinking, trying to sneak onto the 'Arabesque' with those damn Knights guarding her morning and night."

"Everything is planned out, all I need to do is be there in the window between docking and the maintenance crews arriving. I know where to hid once I'm inside, and by the time Lyric knows I'm there, it'll be too late."

Tollard shook his head. "You gotta give up on this notion of a life with Lady Hux, Marab. According to my sources on 'Vindicator', they're more in love than when they were on Coruscant. He lets her fly, they throw dinner parties for the senior officers, and the entire crew are sworn to protect little Hux and would burn a planet to the ground for the youngster."

"Believe me, if I had the choice, I would claim the 'Kestrel' and head for the other side of the known universe. But I signed a contract and the only way to clear the debt is to take them Lyric and her son. I can't let that happen, so we have to find a way to hide her."

"Boy, I thought I taught you better than that. Never deal in humans. It puts bad dreams in your head and bad karma on your tally. If you want to be free of those assholes, run now. Take the 'Kestrel' and leave. Better you never see her than to tempt the bad shit headed your way."

"I appreciate your concern, I really do. But I'd never be free of those Force-sensitive assholes, and I have no idea how far their mind abilities reach. I have to take Lyric to Serenno, then hope Hux and Kylo Ren are ready to listen to the story I have to tell them. Then we get rid of Dooku, and the galaxy returns to the peace that is working now."

"Marab, you make it sound real easy."

"It can be, if I can get those two to stop trying to kill me long enough to listen to me."

Soon, he was in position, waiting in the docking bay assigned to 'Arabesque'. His heart dropped into his stomach when he realized this was the ship he'd been on above Dagobah. The sleek black liner slipped out of the atmosphere on schedule, and as the docking grapples secured the beauty to the landing field, Marab slid quickly into the forward bay, through a bulkhead and into the forward kitchen. Now all he had to do was move periodically through the ship, staying ahead of the cleaning crews.

As he passed a window, he stopped as he saw Lyric and Sloan on the tarmac, meeting the officials who'd been tasked to meet the Field Marshall's family. He saw her, dressed in First Order black, warm smile beaming like sunshine in the gloom of Coruscant. Sloan held out his little hand to the generals and city officials, and the old men smiled and laughed as if it were the most precious thing they'd ever seen.

Two days. He had two days before the ship would lift off for Naboo. He could wait to see her up close. He knew he could.
Chapter Summary

Lyric and Sloan leave for Naboo, for the birth of Kylo Ren and Rey's child, only to discover a stowaway on her ship.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Seventeen

Lyric slid into her seat and buckled her son into the specially made child seat as the liner prepared to leave Coruscant. It had been a whirlwind two days, filled with meetings and receptions with the First Order higher ups and other government officials. To top everything off, the entire planet celebrated Sloan's first birthday with fireworks and other celebrations. While she was touched at their claim as her son's 'home' planet, she bit her tongue to keep from reminding them he was born on Arkanis.

As they slipped the gravity of the grey planet, she felt her spirits rising with the liner. Her shoes came off as she wrapped her legs up underneath her and began to settle in for the hop to Naboo. When Rey contacted her a week ago, in a pure panic after experiencing false labor, Lyric knew as another motherless child, she had to be there for her sister in the Force. All those hours spent alone on 'Vindicator' were beginning to drive her crazy, and Sloan needed grass to run through, not a mechanic's bay.

Once the captain gave her the okay, she unbuckled Sloan's harness and let him stretch out in the cabin with some paper and colored pencils, while she keyed the holo to contact Hux. She'd promised to call every night, just the two of them on their private frequency, and they'd both come to live for those times of the day when they could drop all the pretenses and just be themselves.

"Hux," he answered. She sighed; he hadn't even looked up to see who was on the line. Gone only a few days, and the workaholic was already back to full strength.

"Dada!" Sloan piped in before she could speak. His chubby hands reached for the holo, couldn't understand why they didn't touch his father.

"Hello sweet boy, are you being good for your mother?"

"Yes."

Armitage smiled as Sloan only knew four words: Dada, Mama, Yes, and Mine.

Lyric kissed their child's chubby cheek. "Go play with Nanny Grace. Mama needs to talk with Daddy, okay?"

She watched as he toddled away until she was sure he was with the nanny and she was alone. Then she faced him again.
"I hate being away from you." His loneliness reached across the galaxy to caress her neck through the Kyber. "This ship is like a tomb without you. Even Captain Torega mentioned he misses you pestering him for flight time."

"I know, but Rey has no one on Naboo on her side. Kylo is still entangled on Serenno on my behalf. I have to be with her. I know how much I wished I'd had a mother when Sloan was first born. Everything he did terrified me. If I can save her any of those terrors then I will have settled the debt."

"How long before you think the four of you will be ready to return to us?"

"I would estimate at least a month to six weeks. As soon as the doctor okays Rey and Padme for traveling, we'll be on our way."

"This will be the second longest time apart we've ever experienced."

She smiled. "Three, if you count my time with the Resistance."

"I try not to."

Both laughed, reaching their hands up to touch in the air.

"I miss you so much, Arm. I have the most terrible feeling something's going to happen to separate us."

"Nothing can separate us now, Lyric. You can send me your thoughts, pictures of what's happening to you, and you can speak to me if we both concentrate. We are two halves of one soul, my love. Nothing can separate soulmates."

She switched topics to keep from crying. "Coruscant was just as dreary as before. Every minute was planned to the last detail, including a planet wide birthday party for Sloan. There were fireworks, and a parade, and the evening off as a holiday. Sloan may think he's some sort of planet wide hero if that happens again."

Hux laughed and sat back in his chair. "I can only imagine. But with his and Padme's projected future as the next generation of balance, the entire galaxy will be watching them grow up. We have to make sure both children remain grounded and in touch with something other than the Force."

She frowned. "I don't know how I feel about my son being promised before he's old enough to even walk consistently. Nothing against little Padme but marrying into the Skywalker family isn't the future I would choose for him."

"Solo," he corrected her. "Kylo took his father's surname for Rey and the baby."

She rolled her eyes at him. "Yeah, what a technicality. You will notice the line continued through Leia, not Luke."

"Are we really going to spend our evening arguing about some marriage twenty or more years in the future?"

"No, of course not. What's happened since we left?"

"We heard from Kiren Ren, and the Followers are desperate for an attack to succeed in the Inner Rim. They will stop at nothing to get you and now Sloan for their cloning program. The Knights are almost ready to bring them down, and the Followers are on the edge of a bold move against the
"I know, but we have maximum cloaking enabled, Paden and Marcus, along with the additional other two Knights are patrolling the ship in case anyone tried to sneak on from Coruscant. I have my saber nearby, and no one is getting close to our son. We'll be fine."

"Gods, I miss you so badly. I fucking hate sleeping alone." Hux sounded like a pouty child, and she had to smile.

"When I return," she started shyly, "there's something I'd like to discuss, just us."

"What's that?"

"A daughter?"

There was a long pause, and she thought perhaps she'd overreached in her need to tie him to her even more since the assassination attempt. She wished they'd talked about this in person before she left, but things with Rey had happened so fast there hadn't been time. Quickly she lost all nerve and backed away from her question.

"But there's no hurry. We can talk when you wish."

He frowned. "Did I hurt your feelings by not answering?"

"You hurt my feelings by just sitting there. The not answering was an answer."

"Don't put words in my mouth, Lyric. I don't deserve that."

"Sorry."

"As to your question, there are several things to consider including your health and the state of the galaxy after we take down the Followers. But once this is under control, if you wish to speak with the doctors about another baby I'm all for it. I will insist however, when we start trying, that you give up flying and light sabers for the duration."

"Of course, Armi. Anything you want, you're my husband and I do always try to listen. Besides, this time I'll be just pregnant, not pregnant and recovering from falling out of the sky. Should be a piece of cake compared to last time."

"Should be more fun trying to get pregnant too. I've got lots of ideas."

"Down boy," she giggled. "You've got at least two months before we see each other. Hopefully that will put the children about two years apart in age. Perfect for siblings."

"I love you, wife."

"I love you too."

They disconnected, and Lyric went to find her son. What she found was Kez Marab on the floor, sitting beside Sloan, watching her son draw pictures as her security team pounded on the bulkhead demanding admittance.

"Hi pretty lady. You have a very talented artist here."

"How did you get in here? Last I heard, you were scheduled for execution next week. How did you get past Paden and Marcus?"
"They can't be everywhere at every moment."

"What do you want?"

Marab stood up and crossed the room, leaving Sloan free to continue his coloring undisturbed. Once he moved away from her son, Lyric was ready to Force-slam him to the ground when he held out his hands.

"Please, hear me out before you beat me up."

"Stay away from my son, and I'll listen."

"Dooku and his Followers are after you and Sloan. They want you delivered to Serenno for use in their cloning factories. I can't let that happen, so once Rey and her baby are on board, we're heading to 'Vindicator' so I can throw myself on Hux's mercy and help him and Kylo defeat those madmen."

Her arms wrapped around her waist as he spoke and she felt her heart drop through the floor. They wanted her son.

Kez slid his arms around her. "We can protect him, and you, but it will take all of us, working together to defeat them."

"I'm locked into Naboo for the next two months. It will be weeks before all of us are together again."

"Then we have to stall the Followers until Rey is ready to travel."

He said it like it would be easiest thing in the universe. She rolled her eyes and stomped across the cabin to open the door, admitting Paden and Marcus. Along with two other Knights he didn't know. All four glared at him.

"Gentlemen," she intoned, "we have company. Make sure Naboo makes up a spare bedroom for him."

"Don't you mean cell?" Paden hissed.

"No, not yet. If he makes a move toward my son or appears intent on harming this ship or anyone on it, then kill him."

She turned to Kez, her eyes blazing in anger. "This isn't going to end the way you think. I'm no doe-eyed young girl swayed by a few kisses to abandon all I hold dear. Now, I will think about what you've said but my focus is on Rey and her baby. Paden, show Lt. Marab to a room and lock his ass inside. I'll deal with him later."

Paden shoved the smuggler out of the door, his eyes never leaving hers. Once she was alone with Sloan, she sank to floor next to her son and pulled him close.

"Sloan, you must never talk to strangers, or people who appear without Mama or Daddy. There are many people in this galaxy that would hurt you to get at us. Do you understand? There's a game Mama wants to teach you, how to know who you can trust. Would you like to learn a new game?"

His solemn blue eyes met hers and the toddler nodded in understanding. Throwing his arms around his mother's neck, the boy kissed her cheek over and over as she ran her fingers through his silky black curls.
"I wish Daddy was here right now to deal with these problems."

Sloan touched the Kyber on her necklace and suddenly she was in Armitage's thoughts. He was trying to sleep and failing miserably. He didn't need her problems added to his. She skimmed his mind to see what concerned him so and found herself in his dreams.

"Lyric?"

"Armitage, I wasn't trying to snoop. I wanted you, and Sloan helped my Kyber send me into your head. He knew I needed to see you right now."

"What's wrong?"

"Kez Marab managed to sneak onto 'Arabesque' while we were on Coruscant. I have him locked in a room for the time being, but he claims the Followers are now looking for me and Sloan to aid their cloning project."

The anger rolled through her like a fighter bursting to light speed. "How many times do I have to sentence that man to death before it finally takes hold? Do Paden and Marcus know?"

"Paden locked him in a spare cabin. Armi, he was playing with Sloan."

"I'm going to gut the man with my bare hands." The emotions rolling through her grew stronger, until she felt consumed with rage.

"Armitage please, calm down. I'm going mad over here from your rage."

"Sorry, my love. What does the smuggler want?"

"To protect Sloan and me from Dooku. They want to use both of us in the factories. They are trying to create a diversion somewhere in the galaxy to draw you and the fleet away, so they can sneak us onto the planet for their nefarious program. Armi, if that's the case, shouldn't we stay on Naboo with Rey until Kylo finished his work?"

"Kylo wants her with him, he's dangerously out of balance without her and could tip the whole mission into peril if we don't get them together soon. None of us thought this would take as long as it has, but the group is more spread than we thought. We've cut off many arms of the beast, but the main leaders continue to elude us."

"Go to sleep Armitage. I need to shower and check on Sloan. I'm sorry to have disturbed your sleep."

"The only thing disturbing my sleep is your absence. The bed is too big and too cold without you here."

She smiled at the thought. "The cabin here on 'Arabesque' is quite adequate and has such comfortable restraints." Her tone was filled with innuendo.

There came a groan on his side. "Well thanks my love, now I'm hard as a stone with nothing here but my own hand and imagination."

"Same rules apply here, husband. All alone and wet to the core thinking about you."

"Lyric, I forbid you to come until we see each other in private again. If I find out you came without permission, I will punish you as I see fit. Do you understand?"
For a moment she faltered. Two months was a long time to go with no release, and while masturbation wasn't her favorite form of pleasure, with no husband around it would have been her own alternative.

"The rules work both ways, my husband. No jacking off until I return. That should make trying for another baby easy enough, don't you think?"

"That reminds me, I need to have a droid remove this implant while you are gone."

"Yes," she caressed his thoughts with her love, "you do."

"Lyric?"

"Yes husband?"

"Keep your hands off Kez Marab, do I make myself clear?"

"Absolutely and you have nothing to worry about in the first place. But thank you for caring enough to say the words out loud. You are the only man I want and need."

"I need to sleep now, my love. Until tomorrow."

"Good-night Armitage."

"Good-night, my beloved Lyric."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you everyone for the amazing response to my story! I hope you are enjoying.

There's a war coming up ahead, so hang with me and I think we'll be very happy where our families end up. As always, comments, questions, kudos are awesome and I love them!
Chapter Eighteen

Rey was a bundle of nerves and Lyric couldn't have arrived at a better time. She was escorted to the castle and taken immediately to Rey's quarters. As she came up the hall, two men were being thrown rapidly out of the room she made toward. Both were dressed as doctors and when they noticed Lyric, all their faces bore marked signs of relief.

"Oh Lady Hux, thank the gods you're here. Lady Solo has become rather combative as her time approaches. Hopefully you can calm her down. All this excitement isn't good for the baby."

Lyric smiled, "I think perhaps you gentlemen should take some time off and let me deal with the pregnant Jedi."

The two men fled as rapidly as possible. Lyric let herself into the bedroom. Rey sat by the window, staring out at the sunshine and flowers with a wistful expression on her face. Pregnancy had been good to the former scavenger, and when her hazel eyes lit on Lyric's, a broad smile burst across her face.

"Lyric, thank you, thank you for coming. Did you see those two idiots they call doctors? They want me to stay inside and remain calm until she gets here. I haven't heard from Ben in days, and they want me to remain calm?"

Throwing her arms around Rey, Lyric allowed peace to flow through her and into Rey. "I'm sure Kylo is fine. Just as soon as Padme shows her beautiful face, and you're stable, we'll be on our way to our husbands. We just need to convince your daughter the time is here for her to make an appearance."

Rey rubbed her hands over her belly. "She's so restless. I feel like I'm being beaten from the inside out."

"I remember that feeling. It shouldn't be too much longer. Would you like to take a walk with me and Sloan through the gardens? Walking helped me quite a bit."

The Jedi scoffed "I doubt they'll let me out long enough for a walk."

Lyric smiled, "They don't know me then."

Sure enough, Lyric worked her special magic on the doctors and the guards assigned to protect the Supreme Leader's wife, and soon the two women were walking through the extensive royal gardens, watching Sloan bounce from flower to flower as he followed a butterfly through the myriad of colors and shapes. Rey kept her face turned to the sunshine, and when she tired, they sat on a bench to rest.
"Lyric, your son is beautiful, and so well mannered. I can't wait for Sloan and Padme to grow up together. You don't have any siblings either, do you?"

"No, only my stinky cousin. Armitage has his sister, Bella, who helped me when Sloan was born. Did you meet her when you returned me to Arkanis? I have such blurred memories of that time."

Rey laughed, "I met Bella Hux. She quite a woman. I imagine she and Hux had rather strict upbringings?"

"Different to say the least," Lyric agreed. "Armitage's was worse than hers, however, Bella has her own scars. But my children will be raised with love, respect, and honor. No more motherless children."

As they stood to return to the palace, Rey looked at Lyric in horror. "I think my water just broke."

Suddenly a wave of pain washed over Rey's face, as she doubled over from the contractions. Lyric held her up, allowed her to crush her hand as she counseled Rey to breathe through the pain. In a moment, the contraction ended, and they hurried as well as they could back to the apartments.

They made it to the garden door, before another contraction ripped through Rey and Lyric couldn't hold her alone. Sloan watched wide-eyed as Lyric shouted orders to various guards and servants until she took his hand and they marched upstairs to the room assigned for Rey. She found Paden Ren and entrusted him with Sloan's entertainment while she went to rescue Rey from the overly pompous medics of Naboo.

As soon as she entered the room, she sensed Kylo's Force signature. If she focused closely beside Rey's head, she could make out his form, whispering in her ear, encouraging her. He looked up at Lyric and soon his outline became more solid as she added her energy to their connection.

"How is she doing?" Kylo's eyes were wide with fear of the unknown. His mother had never told many tales of his own birth, so she could see he had nothing to compare with.

"Considering by this time I was spitting venom and punching Armitage, I'd say she's doing wonderful."

Rey snarled as another contraction crested, "If he were close enough for me to punch him I would. Instead I'll just curse every moment I ever spent thinking having his child would be enjoyable."

The misery on Kylo's face almost brought Lyric to laughter. "I believe I mentioned something to Armitage about removing a portion of his anatomy if it came near me again. Luckily that went away with the drugs."

That was the moment the doctor came in offering meds and both women burst into peals of laughter. Soon Rey was feeling no pain, and Lyric felt like a third wheel in the delivery room. Both sensed her discomfort and turned to pull her into their circle. Kylo was particularly grateful.

"I'm glad you can be there, Lyric. Especially with what's going on here on Serenno. The further we can keep you and Sloan for a few weeks, the greater our chances of ending this once and for all."

Rey's face blazed at that. "No way! Our families have been apart long enough. You men cannot protect us from everything. We have to hone our skills ourselves. Lyric, Poe told me you had a light saber."
Kylo's head spun toward Lyric, who had the sense to look guilty. "Very long story short, when Armitage was in the bacta tank I was visited by a Force-ghost. Twice. The first time he helped me work through what I needed to do in order to protect the First Order in that moment of crisis, right after Armitage was shot. The second time the ghost gave me a saber, which he said belonged originally to a friend of his. Said I needed to embrace the Jedi inside."

Reaching behind her, Lyric slipped the light saber from her belt and brought it out. Kylo recognized it at once.

"This is from my private collection. No one can enter that room except me. How did you get this? Who gave it to you?"

Rey laid her hand on her husband's arm and he stopped in mid argument. Instead, his eyes blazed at Lyric like dark suns.

"The Force-ghost who first visited me, long ago was Ben Kenobi. So, when Armitage was shot, and I saw that blue glow I thought it was Ben again. But it wasn't. It was someone else. Anakin Skywalker."

Kylo near jumped the birthing table to get to Lyric. "What did you say?"

"Your grandfather, before the mask and the suit. You have a lot of his mannerisms."

"I wouldn't know, neither of them have ever shone themselves to me."

"And I yelled at him about that. He said that having conversations in your family is difficult. Everyone wants to talk at once and no one wants to be wrong. But he did say to tell you he's sorry he took Qin-Gon's saber, but it seemed the best fit for my height. It was an emergency."

At that, Kylo seemed to calm down. "Hold it out to the side, then turn it on."

Doing as he asked, she flicked it off and returned it to her hip once Kylo seemed content, at least for the moment. Rey's contractions doubled and the doctor pronounced her ready to push. With both Kylo and Lyric shouting encouragement and lending Rey strength through the Force when she faltered, it was only another hour before little Padme presented herself.

Lyric stepped back at that moment, letting Rey and Force-sent Kylo spend those important first moments with their daughter. Smiling she rubbed her Kyber stone, sending Hux images of the newest member of their First Order family. Then she helped Rey with getting the freshly cleaned baby to latch on for her first meal. It was several hours before Paden Ren brought Sloan to her, crying for his mother.

She hefted him to her hip and showed him the baby lying peaceful and sleeping in Rey's arms. Lyric was struck with the similarities between the two children. Padme was born with her father's dark curly hair, just as Sloan inherited Lyric's. Sloan had Hux's piercing blue eyes, while Padme had Rey's soft hazel eyes. Even at this tender age, their personalities seemed to complement each other: Sloan quiet and reassuring while Padme was energy and movement.

Sloan leaned over to carefully pat the baby's head, then put his arms around Lyric's neck and sighed loudly. Someone was feeling left out and out of sorts, and Lyric knew it was time for Rey to bond with her daughter.

"Rey, I'm going to take Sloan on an adventure around the grounds. With Padme sleeping, you should too. If you wake before I return, just think of me and I'll be right here."
"Thank you, Lyric, for leaving Hux to be with me. I feel more capable of handling this with you here. I mean, Sloan made it to one. If one motherless child can do this, another can as well, right?"

She hugged the smaller girl tightly. "Absolutely! I'll be back soon. I promise."

As she was walking away, she heard Rey call.

"Lyric, when I'm up we can spar with our sabers."

"I can't wait," she called back. Both women smiled at each other, then Lyric pushed through the door and out into the sunny hallway. Marcus Ren was on duty for her at that moment.

"Marcus, please find Paden and join us in the gardens. I thought we might have a quiet afternoon picnic in the sunshine while Lady Rey and the baby nap."

"Of course, my lady. Where will you be?"

"In the wildflower garden I believe."

"Then we will meet you in the wildflower garden."

Lyric went to grab a shawl for her shoulders, then through the kitchen to grab a basket she'd asked for earlier. Then she practically skipped down the crushed marble path to the wildflower garden, near the beekeeper's cottage, Sloan laughing at her antics. The sunshine on the back of her neck was exotic and soothing, and more than once she found herself wishing for a duty posting on a sunny, warm planet.

She lay in the sunshine, listening to Sloan babble in his own language bringing her flowers and pretty stones as he and his nanny enjoyed the beautiful afternoon. The two Knights watched over them from a bench where they were meditating.

"I've always loved this place. It's been a long time since I was here."

Anakin's voice came from well above her. Opening one eye, she glared up at him.

"Go away. You've brought me enough trouble for one day."

"Ah right, Ben found out about the saber."

"And he's pissed at me because you won't talk to him. I don't quite understand how that's my fault, but you need to make it right and I mean now. Why are you here anyway? My time as ruler is long over."

Gracefully, Anakin sank down into a meditation pose. "We need to discuss what's going to happen next. You have to be prepared, all of you."

"Prepared for what?"

"For Kez Marab to kidnap your son."
No Good Deed

Chapter Summary

Lyric has to deal with the truth of her situation

Chapter Nineteen

The world spun away and she felt adrift in the Void. At first she didn't think she'd heard Skywalker correctly, but when he didn't add anything else she realized it was true. Kez would take her son.

Over her dead body.

Anakin saw her fury building and held up his hand. "Wait, you can't give away that we know."

'It's my son. You cannot ask that of me."

Anakin's Force signature wavered under the strength of her anger. "Lyric, you and I, we're different from other Jedi or even Sith. We were born of the Force, as was Rey. Our emotions tend to rule us, despite our best efforts to maintain balance. But in this matter, you must remain calm, or things will go very wrong, very quickly. There are too many things in play for anger or short-sightedness."

"Marab accepted a contract, quite a while ago, from the Followers to take you to them on Serenno once Sloan was weaned. They promised him the boy would be left with his father, and that he could have whatever was left of you, when they were through. But then he got caught by Hux and detained for months while you left with Sloan on 'Vindicator'. Since then, the True Jedi have discovered your son's powers and want to control them as well as your own. Marab is understandably torn."

She hissed through clenched teeth, "He's going to be torn in half if he tried to touch my son."

"Lyric, calm down. He's going to take the boy, we cannot stop that without starting another galaxy-wide war. But we can insure that he will take the boy to Kylo Ren. Ben must then protect him from Dooku. You must speak with Ben."

"NO!" Her fury was hot as a solar flare. If she could have poked him in the chest repeatedly she would. "You will go to Kylo Ren, and you will tell him what the hell is going on. Then you will watch over my child as if he were your own. He's flesh and blood, not a pawn on a chessboard."

"I will do as you ask, only because I feel your agony. No parent should have to watch their child taken away, no matter the reason." His distress spoke of his own loss, so many decades ago.

Lyric wondered out loud, "How is Marab going to get from Naboo to Serenno? No one on 'Arabesque' will help him take Sloan away from me?"

Anakin smiled sadly, "The 'Kestrel' is here, left by an unsuspecting Poe Dameron in case Rey
needed to make a quick escape from Naboo.

She could feel the anger run through her blood like a freight train through her body, erasing any possible feelings still lingering for Kez Marab in the cold certainty of her rage. Closing her eyes, she centered her focus and calmed the rage into a banked fire stoking her resolve. Opening her eyes again, she glared at the ghost meditating beside her.

"What do I have to do?"

Lyric opened the flood gates in her mind and called for Kylo, Rey, and Hux to see and hear the things Anakin was relaying to her. It would save time and convince them of the seriousness of the threat against them all. Kylo was furious until he understood his grandfather was coming to Serenno to help with operations there. Rey was also furious, angered at the danger to a child.

Anakin continued. "One night there will be fireworks to celebrate the three-month birthday of my great granddaughter. Marab will come to the nursery during the height of the explosions to take Sloan. Ben, Rey – Padme Leia, Mea as Sloan will call her, will be fine. She's going to wonder where Sloan is going, but Marab will not bother her."

"To the smuggler's credit, Marab will take the nanny and supplies along with Sloan. Once free of Naboo, he will attempt to take the boy directly to Serenno. When Hux intercepts the ship, True Jedi sympathizers on 'Vindicator' will make sure Marab and the boy escape when we are not looking. If Hux can save the boy and destroy all the sympathizers Sloan will be all right on board, but if even one survives, it could be tougher."

"Once on Serenno, it will be Ben's responsibility to free the boy and then hide him from Dooku until we have defeated the Followers and the cloning factories are ash and dust. Under no circumstances, Lyric, are you to go with Marab. If he takes you both, odds of us rescuing either of you without harm are low. Continue your saber training, especially once Rey is able to train as well."

Kylo burst in through Lyric's connection. "You mean the saber you stole from me?"

Anakin looked suitably chastised. "She needed one in a hurry, and it was the only I could think of that would be suitable. When all this is done, you and Rey can help her build her own proper saber. And I left the original Kyber in your safe."

"Spoken like a true only child who never had to share. I did ask. Qin-Gon is perfectly happy with her borrowing the saber for the time being."

"It would have been nice to have been asked before you rifled through my possessions."

"Anakin," Lyric broke into the family spat. "Will Sloan be safe with Kez?"

"Of course, he'll be safe. Marab loves the boy as if he were his own, he remembers the boy as a part of you. But the Followers are torturing Marab with the same pain amplifiers they used on you. He wants Hux to intercept him but is afraid that will bring an attack in the Inner Core. Afraid you will get caught in the crossfire. That's another reason he wants you to go with him."

Lyric stared out into nothing, wondering how the Force expected her to stand by and let Kez take her son. It was unhuman to ask such a thing. Better that Kez take her and leave Sloan hidden, but she knew where that path led, and had no desire to participate in her own defilement.

Rey broke in, "What if I come with Sloan and leave Lyric with Padme? Ben and I can free Sloan."
Anakin smiled at his granddaughter-in-law. "Then Dooku would use your gene pattern in his cloning factories. Either way it isn't pretty. We cannot hand them two Jedi gene patterns, no matter what combination it comes from."

"Sloan is strong in the Force," Anakin reminded them. "Nor will he be alone. Luke or I will stay with him at all times, until Ben and the Knights rescue him."

Lyric held her head up high and broke into all the arguing. "All right, I concede that this is going to happen and I can't stop it. But Sloan must be prepared for what's going to happen to him. I wish I could send Marcus Ren with him. I'd feel better about this entire sordid mess if Marcus could stay with him along with the nanny."

Kylo piped in. "Why not ask the smuggler to take Marcus with him, as a concession to Lyric? Perhaps in guarantee of her safety he will allow a concession for the boy."

"So I walk up to him and say 'here's my son and his guard, have a nice trip'? Are you mad?"

Anakin sighed heavily. "Lyric, this is going to happen. How prepared do you want to be?"

"I want this to be a bad dream."

"Lyric, you must be reasonable. Now more than ever."

"I have to speak with Armitage. He and I need to make some decisions."

At that, Anakin had to the decency to look guilty. "Of course, my dear child. But now that we are all on the same page, please make sure there aren't any accidental explosions in the Force. Now, while you go talk to Hux, I'm going to talk with Ben and start our security plans for Sloan's protection. Please know that Ben and I will take good care of him, Lyric. He's my future great grandson-in-law, how could I let him get hurt?"

With that, the four-way in her head ceased, leaving her with a gigantic migraine. Sitting up she watched Sloan chasing a butterfly and wondered how she was supposed to do this. The cloudless day suddenly seemed cold and menacing.

Her Knights came over and knelt beside her, having felt the multiple Force signatures. Paden's eyes searched her own.

"What makes you so sad my lady?"

She grabbed the Knight's hand and replayed the conversation as she knew the words would never come out normally. It was hard enough to watch the second time. As the truth of what was going to happen registered, she saw the raw anger on first Paden then Marcus' faces.

After Paden lifted his pain struck visage to hers, she leaned her head against his sturdy shoulder.

"I don't think I can bear this, Paden."

The Knight removed his gloves so he could hold her hands and reveal to her his true feelings toward her, toward Sloan, toward Marab.

"Marcus or I will go with Sloan, my lady. Have no doubts about that. He's like a little brother to us, and we will all guard him with our lives."

She wrapped her palm around Paden's cheek. "Thank you, both. You've been my life-savers more
than once. Now I need to go talk with Armitage, please make sure Sloan and the nanny return safely to our rooms."

"Of course, my lady."

*****

Hux was cold fire by the time she connected with him via the holonet. He, Kylo, and several of their top military strategists were already deep in offensive planning when she called and he almost told Phasma to take a message. But one look at her stricken face and he'd chased everyone but Kylo from the room.

"Lyric, are you all right?"

"No Armitage, I'm very far from all right. What do I do? How do I let that man waltz off with our son?"

"Kylo and the Knights already have several plans in place for freeing Sloan. While I'd much rather pluck him from the 'Kestrel' before he makes landing on Serenno, with Kylo is the second safest place to be."

He could feel her emotions like tidal waves of distress, anguish, rage, and a large dose of self-loathing for allowing this nightmare into their lives. He had to stop her recriminations before she became crippled with doubt.

"Do not blame yourself for this," he admonished her gently. "Marab made his own grave when he signed that contract with the Followers. We just have to keep Sloan safe."

"I will never forgive myself if anything happens to my baby."

"I will never forgive Marab if anything happens to either one of you. Lyric, can you do this, stay put to protect yourself?"

"I don't know," she confessed, tears streaming down her face. "I truly don't know."

Hux strummed his fingers on his desk as he thought. Watching his wife cry, knowing he could do nothing to console her, was torment. He cursed Marab again for the pain he was still bringing to their family.

"Where is Sloan now?"

"In the gardens, surrounded by four Knights."

"Who's guarding you, Rey and Padme?"

"Palace guards. Here in the royal compound they are all registered assassins. More than suitable replacements for the Knights."

"Lyric, you must promise me you won't do anything rash, or do anything to attempt to free Sloan once Marab absconds with him. The plan is to keep you both free and safe. Do I make myself clear?"

She nodded, her eyes distraught and haunted. "What is it with the Force and motherless children? Sloan is still a baby."

"Kylo and Anakin think Sloan and Padme will be even stronger in balancing the Force than he and
Rey. A lot of people will be competing for control of the children, wanting to control the future balance of the galaxy."

"So you're okay with our son being used as bait to bring down the Followers?"

"Love, we've been apprehending their stooges since 'Vindicator' left Coruscant. They aren't as numerous as the Resistance, but infinitely more dangerous. They are a bomb waiting to explode and the sooner they are dismantled the better. Now, rest please, and let us come up with some plans. Please?"

"I'll try, Armitage. I promise I'll try."

"That's all I can ask of you my love."

*****

She ate dinner with Rey and Sloan but had no appetite. How could she eat, knowing what was coming for her son? Rey sympathized but she had Mea to protect and care for. This was Lyric's battle alone.

She took to sleeping in a chair in the nursery, unwilling to be separated from Sloan for even a moment. Weeks slipped by, and Lyric never let her guard down for a moment. Whenever she would see Marab around the compound, her blood would boil. When she and Rey trained with their light sabers, Sloan watched as the four Knights patrolled the area. When they walked through the gardens in the beautiful sunshine, surrounded by the four masked and hooded Knights, she felt danger in every direction.

Her nervous system was on the edge of collapse, and she was going mad from lack of sleep. Each day became an endless waiting match, her patience against Marab's time schedule, and she didn't know if she'd outlast the smuggler or not. In some ways it felt as if she were living out her nightmares.

Doctors pronounces Rey and Mea ready for travel once the ninety-day mark came and went with no troubles. Every ones' hearts sank as they realized Marab was running out of time in which to enact his plans. Rey tried to keep Lyric busy with packing and other errands, but it was hopeless. She was a mother who knew the worst possible experience was coming and there was no stopping it.

Paden Ren and Marcus Ren spent most of their time with Sloan, beginning the fundamentals of Jedi mind talking, while Lyric and Sloan worked on sending messages through the Kyber, just as his parents did. They left Rey's security to the other two Knights, Keva Ren and Seren Ren. A pall hung over the household, and as their last day on Naboo drew to a close, Lyric felt her heart failing.

As dark fell, and fireworks and lanterns lit the night sky, Kez Marab came at last for the boy.
Betrayal Is a B*t@h

Chapter Summary

Lyric suffers the ultimate betrayal as the First Order begins action against the false Lord Dooku.

Chapter Twenty

Marab stayed well out of sight once the 'Arabesque' landed on Naboo, unsure he wanted to see the anger on Lyric's face toward him. He'd found his ship, right where Dameron left her, and spent his days making sure she was outfitted and ready to go at a moment's notice. Once everything was ready, he began stalking Lyric and Sloan Hux.

He soon discovered security around the children had become impenetrable. Lyric and Rey had given their Knights over to the children's security detail, and only their word would free the boy from their custody. Meanwhile, the palace guards had taken over watching the wives, and their protection was tight as a drum. While both women were well trained in combat moves, they took no chances with the safety of their children.

Lyric and Rey had taken to wearing their light sabers openly. He didn't know if they were on to him or simply responding to the increased pressure of having the entire future of the First Order and the balance of the galaxy all in one location, something Ren and Hux had openly tried to avoid prior to this. Either way, he was intimidated by their experience with the weapons.

The night before they were due to leave, he made his play. The plan was to take Sloan once he was fast asleep, then corner Lyric and convince her to come with them, at blaster point if needed to get her on his ship. Then race to the 'Kestrel' and jump away before they were missed. Imagine his surprise when he opened the nursery door to find a welcoming committee.

Lyric and Rey led the group, light sabers at the ready but not on. Marcus Ren held Sloan in his arms, the nanny close behind him, eyes wide in fear. The other three Knights were in defensive formation and Marab felt set up. When he looked them in the eyes, all he could see was anger.

"Kez, how could you?" His heart broke at the pain in her voice.

Her eyes were swollen and red from crying, and he felt horrible for bringing her such anguish. But he had no choice. She'd felt that pain amplifier, she knew how it felt. There was no way he would survive years with that level of pain subduing him.

"All I need to do is give him to Hux. He can protect him from the Followers. Then you and I will continue on to …"

"I'm not going."

"What?"

"Sloan, along with Marcus Ren and the nanny, will be leaving with you. I am staying here, far
from Dooku and his machinations. I've spoken with my son and he won't fight you unless you hurt someone he loves. He is still a baby, but a strong Jedi. You cross him at your own peril."

"But Lyre, he wants you too."

"I am not available. Either take my son and run like the cowardly swine you are or go without either of us and run as far as you can. Keep running and never stop because if I ever hear of you again I will kill you myself."

The rage and disgust she threw at him from her eyes crushed his soul, dashed his futures against the iron of her light saber. He tried to talk to her, tried to get closer, but she clicked on the saber and the amber blade blocked him as Rey powered up her double-bladed purple light staff, blocking him as well. Both women were too much for him to approach, and he screamed at her from across the room.

"Lyric, he won't rest until he has you as well. How can you let your baby go, knowing what Dooku has in store for him?"

"Because it will be worse if he has us both. The Force is taking care of my son, and will protect him from you, and from Dooku. I believe in my son."

"I wish you still believed in me."

"You lost that when you agreed to take Sloan."

"I won't let anyone hurt him, Lyre. I care for him too."

"Don't you dare talk to me of feelings. If you cared as much as you claim, you wouldn't do this to me, wouldn't rip us apart like this."

"I'm trying to save all of us," he screamed at her.

Lyric shook her head, clicking off the light saber, hanging it from her belt as she took Sloan from Marcus Ren and approached Kez. Anger radiated from her in waves, crushing his heart within his chest.

"Sloan, do you remember what Mama and Daddy told you?"

With wide eyed sincerity, the fifteen-month-old told his mother, "Listen to Marcus Ren."

Kez opened his mouth in amazement. Lyric glared at him over the boy's head.

"Sloan is very smart, Kez. Don't try to question him or hurt him. He's going with you because Armitage and I have asked him to and given him our permission to travel with you. We've also given him permission to defend himself against you if needed."

She looked at her son. "Sloan, when you reach Serenno you must keep your thoughts to yourself and don't talk to anyone who doesn't know the proper game, understand? Do you remember what we said about the game, how to play?"

Again, the boy nodded then threw his arms around his mother's neck, sobs bursting from his tiny frame. She clutched him tight, clicking a small necklace around his neck. Marab was surprised to see it bore an amber Kyber just as his parents' necklace. Mother and son touched each other's stone, then nodded. He wondered what they meant, those amber stones.
The boy marched over to Marab and stared up at him. Stopping before the older man, Sloan looked up to his face, then kicked Marab in the shin as hard as he could. As the man doubled over to grab his leg, Sloan looked him in the eye and stated, "Don't like you." Then he, the nanny and the Knight headed toward the door, waiting for Marab to follow them. He turned toward Lyric, whose face was set as cold stone against him.

"If you hurt him Kez, I will torment you for eternity. There will be nowhere to hide from my anger and pain."

"Please come with us. I'll even leave you on 'Vindicator' with Hux. Please Lyre, come."

"No."

As he left, Marab realized she was right. There was no hiding from the pain in those eyes.

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Hux was on the bridge when they received the call Marab had kidnapped Sloan. The collective anger around the room as details emerged of the kidnapping was a raging fire shaped into one clear purpose – to destroy the Followers and rescue the boy. In order for all the plans to come to fruition, the 'Kestrel' had to emerge from hyperspace, and the ship was overdue.

Lyric had to be heavily sedated, and Rey was a hot mess of emotions as they came to the acceptance that there was nothing they could do to help rescue the boy. They had to let Hux and Kylo use their considerable skills and resources to handle the operation, and though Ren and his dead grandfather claimed to have everything prepared on Serenno, Hux wanted his son safe on 'Vindicator'. In order for that to happen, he needed to pluck 'Kestrel' from the sky.

He paced patterns around the bridge, and his uniform felt too tight at the neck, he couldn't get enough air. Periodically he would check the ship's clock for the current time, then he would start the pattern all over again. Finally, Captain Phasma asked cautiously if he wouldn't be more comfortable waiting in his quarters until the ship arrived.

"Gods, no," he snapped. "I'm barely coping in this open space. Could you imagine if I were encased by walls? I'd go as mad as Snoke. I'll be fine. Just, let me pace."

Pacing gave him a focus, though he'd never admit it. It reminded him of walking the halls while Lyric was in the bacta tank. Weeks spent walking from the bridge to the bowels of the ship where the med-center was located. Of the last time he'd not known if his heart would survive.

Four hours past when fashionably late became late, 'Kestrel' jumped into the system right in front of the 'Punisher', who immediately grabbed the ship on tractor beam. Hux was on a shuttle and in the air before 'Kestrel' could settle in the hanger.

As the airlock cycled, Sloan raced straight into his father's arms. Hux could not hold his son tight enough, checking his body for wounds or bruises. He barely noticed Marab disembark under the watchful eyes of Marcus Ren. Hux only had eyes for his son.

"Sloan, are you all right?"

"Yes Daddy. Not hurt."

"Promise me?"

"Yes Daddy."
A chain around his heart let loose and he stood, pulling Sloan up close to his body.

"Marab, why shouldn't I just kill you now and save myself any further aggravation?"

"Because he'll just keep sending sensitives after them, and soon it won't be just Lyric and Sloan. He'll make a play for Rey and Padme as well. He has to be taken down for good, to protect them."

"And what do you get out of this?"

"She lives. Sloan lives. Anything else is secondary."

"Why do you care about Sloan?"

Marab looked at the floor, then back to Hux. "Because when, I mean, before - when Lyric left and we were running. I felt him moving within her, and it was ... I don't want to hurt him. I want to help you save him."

"Phasma have him taken to a holding cell, maximum guards but make sure he's comfortable and well treated. I'll deal with him later."

"Yes, Field Marshall."

As Marab was escorted past him, Hux lay his hand on the smuggler's arm. "Thank you, for returning my son to me."

Marab met him square in the eye. "I didn't do it for you, but you're welcome."

Watching the man disappear into yet another First Order holding center, Hux wondered how many supporters of the True Jedi were already on his ship, and how long would it take to catch one in the act of freeing Marab to complete his assignment and steal his child. It took every ounce of his strength not to grab a blaster and shoot the man's brains across the deck.

Motioning for Marcus Ren and the nanny to follow, he carried Sloan toward their quarters. Sloan threw his arms about his father's neck and lay his head on his shoulder. When he touched his father's face, Hux felt his son's fear and the question of whether he was safe and if he had done his father proud.

Pulling Sloan closer, he whispered to him, "I'm extremely proud of you, and your mother will be too once she arrives. You're safe here on 'Vindicator', and we won't be separated again."

The boy seemed to release his tension, and both smiled at the other.

Once in their quarters, the nanny took Sloan to his bedroom while Marcus Ren followed Hux to his office.

"Report," he barked once they were locked in the private room.

'Marab took us from Naboo almost three days ago. We've been well treated but he kept trying to get Sloan to trust him and talk with him. Sloan is too smart for him though, and I believe the man grows discouraged. Lady Hux is another sore topic with Marab. After this maneuver, she despises him and Sloan believes him a monster. All the man's fantasies have exploded before his face, just to escape the Follower's pain amplifiers."

"But he brought Sloan to me."

"Yes, I could tell he was distraught about taking the boy in the first place. He debated endlessly the
folly of taking the boy to Dooku without the main prize, Lyric."

"Thank you, Marcus. I will have Sloan here with me for the rest of the evening. Go rest up, and report back in the morning for his security. I'll let you know if anything changes."

"Thank you, Field Marshall."

Hux found his son in his bedroom, playing with his toys as if he'd never left months ago with his mother. He sank to the floor beside his son, eyes never leaving his perfect face, afraid he would disappear before his very eyes. Sloan looked up and saw the sadness of his father's expression. He ran over and hugged him tightly.

"Daddy."

"I love you, Sloan."

They sat together on the floor, playing for hours. Sloan babbled in his own language while Hux pretended to understand every word his son said. His heart burned at the thought of Marab turning his blood over to those maniacs and a fire slowly built up within his soul that frightened him with its intensity. Too soon the nanny came to feed Sloan dinner, then bathe him for bed. Hux took the opportunity to call Naboo and check on his wife.

He was in luck, she was awake. She'd been heavily sedated for two days.

"Please tell me you have him?" The pleading in her voice and eyes pulled at his heart.

"I do. Marab finally did something honorable and brought him to me. He's taking a bath as we speak. Marcus Ren says Marab treated them well, and Sloan was happy to see his room and his toys. He's fine, not a scratch on him. A little quiet, but we played for quite a while on the floor and he seemed fine."

"Oh, thank the gods," she gasped, holding onto the chair as she sat down heavily. "I've been imagining the worse ever since they left."

"Even the medical scan showed he's fine."

"Do you think this will scar him forever?"

Hux thought about his own scars, both physical and emotional, and the anger built anew.

"I can't answer that, my love."

Her eyes were filled with unshed tears.

"How are you holding up, beloved?" He missed her so hard it was a physical ache in his soul.

Her smile was sad and forced. "I've certainly felt worse, and I'm emotionally much better now that I know Sloan is with you. It's been torment to be alone, knowing my child was in danger."

"Stop the worrying. No one on this ship would allow anyone to take Sloan away, but just in case, Kylo is on Serenno, ready at a moment's notice, to rescue him. I want you to relax and let us deal with the Followers. This is what we do best, after all."

She momentarily glared at him "Well, maybe if I wasn't so stressed out..."

Quickly realizing what she was referring to, he smiled that amused grin she hated. "You've been
such a good girl. Maybe I should give you a night's respite so you can release your frustrations."

"Absolutely not! I can hold out just as long you can, probably longer. Besides, masturbation is a poor substitute for your beautiful cock."

"Careful woman, I'm not above taking a shuttle to Naboo at this point. Cold showers are becoming a standard way of waking up alone these days."

"If only you could. It's been too long, entirely too long, since we were together."

"Kylo swears this will all be over soon. The Knights have already identified the tactical targets, explosives are being prepared as we speak, and we are on schedule now that Sloan is secured onboard."

"Will the two of you be in any danger on 'Vindicator'?"

"Troops will be landing, but under Kylo's ground control. I will direct operations up here while Phasma will coordinate efforts on Serenno. While there is always the chance of something happening, we will be fine."

"What about those on Serenno who are innocent of Dooku's machinations?"

"Kylo is already working with their Resistance leaders to coordinate their attacks."

Just then, Sloan burst into the room, having heard his mother's voice. More tears were shed as mother and child saw each other for the first time in days. Soon, Sloan's attention wandered, and Hux was alone with her again. She looked weary and heartsick and in need of his support.

"That reminds me, my love. I have a surprise for you."

"What's that?"

"I had my implant removed today. Once the doctors give you a clean bill of health, then we'll be ready to discuss that daughter you were mentioning earlier."

"Really, Armitage?"

He nodded. "It was a lot easier to put in than take out, I'll have you know. But one less obstacle to another pregnancy to deal with."

They signed off for the night, Hux then carrying his sleeping child to bed, nodding to Marcus Ren who was back on duty having slept the entire day. Hux knew the Knight would remain on duty until relieved by someone he trusted. To know his son was so well protected allowed him to place the boy in his own bed and walk away for the night.

After filling in Marcus on his schedule for the evening, Hux took the lift down to the holding cells, making his way to the one containing Kez Marab.

"Come to gloat, Field Marshall?"

"Actually Marab, the Supreme Leader and I have a proposition for you. You help us, and once the Followers are destroyed, their spies exposed, you can take the 'Kestrel' and leave the for the Unknown Regions. We know your resources are considerable and we will pay you handsomely to disappear."

"Can all of your plans protect her from them? From those pain amplifiers? From the cloning labs?"
"We think so. We've invested quite a lot of time and resources into this operation. All we need is your help."

"What do you want?"

"There is a landing strip next to the main cloning facility. It's guarded from air and land around the clock. We need to land several divisions on that strip. You're going to get the code for us. Then you will land one of the teams on Serenno. After that, you are free to leave, so long as you never come near my family again. Ever."

"But Sloan and Lyric will be safe?"

"Absolutely."

"Then we have a deal. I'll get your teams to the surface. You assholes just have to make sure he never leaves."

"Tell us what you know, about the facilities, about the main house, everything. When we came the first time for Lyric, Dooku had already escaped before we arrived."

Marab nodded. "He keeps a ship on stand-by at all times, and the castle is riddled with passages. Once he hears the fleet is about to surround the planet, he'll take off. He's done it so many time, he's able to jump to light speed only seven miles above the atmosphere. Way too soon for most trackers to catch up to the ship."

"So that's how he's managed to escape our sensors." Hux picked up his datapad and sent a message to communications and targeting to tighten their scans as much as possible, to be alert for a ship jumping impossibly close to the planet.

"Hux, don't let the boy out of your sight, or of that Knight that's with him. Dooku is getting frantic as the attacks against the factories have increased. He knows we made it into system, he'll know the boy is up here. Don't kid yourself into thinking everyone on this ship is on your side."

"How many Followers are there on board 'Vindicator'?"

"Seventeen that I am aware of, let's round it to twenty to be safe."

"Can you identify them?"

Marab shrugged. "A few. Others will come by to try and set me free, so I would keep a watch on this door around the clock. But I don't intend to submit to their requests."

"I know the pain amps are terrifying, but please, for Sloan's sake, try to resist. If I have to kill you, Lyric will skin me alive."

"Why?"

"She wants that honor for herself."

The smuggler lifted his worried visage to Hux. "She'll never forgive me for this, will she?"

"You'd have an easier time asking a nerf to write a grand opera. You did the one thing no mother can forgive. You separated her from her cub. Right now, even I'm scared of her wrath."

Across the Galaxy

Chapter Summary

Lyric and Rey are called across the Force from Serenno

Chapter Twenty-one

She wasn't sure which was worse, knowing her son was half a galaxy away and in mortal peril; or watching Rey bond with Padme Leia while she foundered. Every morning she put on a fake smile and went about assisting Rey with her new role of mother. In the afternoons, while the baby slept, the two women worked out with their sabers. Rey was an excellent teacher, often showing Lyric sly underhanded moves she'd learned in the two year's she'd been undercover around the galaxy.

Naboo was beautiful, and Lyric looked at purchasing a vacation home to be closer to Rey and Kylo who would be staying there quasi-permanently. But day by day her enthusiasm for most anything waned. She took to spending hours outside, only returning when the sun set and the lanterns were lit. Rey noticed her Force signature wavering back and forth between action and inaction and decided to confront her newest best friend.

"Lyric, we need to be with the men."

"But we both promised to stay here until called for. The galaxy can't afford for us all to fall into Dooku's clutches. Are you in touch with Kylo, does he had any estimate on how much longer, or when it might be safe to return?"

"I haven't asked him, but I will. Tonight, I promise."

"Rey, I think I'm losing my mind," she confessed. "All day I hear Sloan's tears and at night I die a thousand deaths on Serenno. What do I do?"

"How long has it been since you slept?"

Lyric burst into laughter soon followed by tears. "I can't even remember. I don't consider Armitage having me drugged as sleeping."

"I can't make the Bond connect us," Rey confessed. "It happens when the Force wants. But I promise, as soon as I make connection, I will find out what's happening. Hang on, we'll get out of here soon."

It was two more mornings before Rey came running to Lyric's room with news. She'd seen Kylo the night before, and the news was it appeared the offense would be soon, perhaps hours. Sloan was still safe on 'Vindicator', and more than a dozen Followers had been caught and executed over the previous week. If things went well, they should all be reunited before the next complete moon cycle.
Yet Lyric couldn't help the feeling of dread that crept over her as she moved through her day, confirming items were packed or sent into storage. Paden Ren shadowed her everywhere, and by the end of things to do, she was ready to scream.

She thought longingly of the TIE fighter she's claimed as her own, with Captain Torega's permission. What she wouldn't give to have it with her now, to be able to jump inside and fly away to join her family? How much longer would they have to wait for this to be over?

As if in answer to her frustration, a scream shot through her brain, and she stumbled against the wall. Sloan! Something was wrong with Sloan. She raced to try the holo, but received no answer. Panicked she went to Rey's room, to find Rey and Padme as unglued as herself. Whatever had happened on the other side of the galaxy affected both of them.

The women knew what had to be done. Lyric started the conversation rolling.

"We need a ship."

Rey agreed, "And a pilot we can trust to make at least two different deliveries without being blown out of the sky."

"With nerves of steel, in case the Followers get too close and he drops the strike team."

"There's really only one pilot for this job."

"He'd be hurt if we asked anyone else."

"Do you want to ask him, or should I?"

Lyric held up her hands. "Chewy is your arena and Poe mine. You ask the Wookie if he's in. If not, then I'll ask my cousin. Or a complete stranger, really it might be easier than asking Poe."

Rey pulled out the comms device Chewy made sure she had whenever she was away from the 'Falcon'. Lyric tried to focus on either Hux or Sloan, but all she got were vague images of fear and fighting. She didn't know if they were on 'Vindicator' or if Dooku had managed to get her son down to the planet. Fear ran so thick through her system, she could taste the metallic stink of its claws.

"Alright, Chewy will be here in a few hours to take us to Serenno. I can't get anything from Ben. Can you reach either of your men?"

"Not a word. Only the repeated feeling something is horribly wrong. Now, important question. Who's going with us?"

Rey smiled. "You mean, who's going with us who won't stop us?"

"Exactly."

"You, me, Chewy, Paden Ren, Kiva Ren, that's all I can think off."

"Good, I'm glad we agree a small party will work better than going in with guns blazing and divisions at our back. Now, there's every chance we may jump into a battle already in progress in the space above the planet. Therefore, when we get ready to drop out, everyone needs to go to battle stations. If possible, we send me to 'Vindicator', 'Punisher' if not. Then you and the rest head for Serenno to help with removing those factories."
"Any questions?"

"Yeah," Rey scratched her head. "What do I do with Padme?"

"She can come with me to the ship. You know I'll protect her with my life."

Lyric and Rey pulled their foreheads together and whispered as one. "No more motherless children for the Force."

The wait seemed to drag on forever, and when Paden Ren came at last to gather her for boarding the 'Millennium Falcon', Lyric had a massive migraine headache and an itchy trigger finger. She could feel Hux's pain, and Sloan's; it was driving her into a frenzy she didn't know how to control.

When Chewy arrived, he also brought Poe Dameron, much to Lyric's amazement. When filled in on what was going on, he nearly chained Lyric to a statue on Naboo to forbid her from going. It only took ten minutes of them punching the shit of each other for her to gain the upper hand and convince him she was more than ready to defend her son and husband, if need be. Now sporting a black eye, while Dameron had a bloody nose and split lip, Lyric and Rey loaded their belongings, and Padme, onto the 'Falcon' and within an hour, they were on their way to Serenno.

Now that he'd decided to throw in with his cousin, Dameron contacted the Resistance and told them to meet him at Serenno. Sloan was important to the Resistance as well as the First Order, and no one was taking the boy without a fight. They agreed to meet some ways off in system, to scope out the situation before joining. With Poe in the main seat and Chewy co-piloting, the women worked on battle strategies.

Lyric would go to wherever Hux might be. The escape pods were ready, and all she really needed to take with her was Padme, the light saber, and her comms device. Rey would continue with the Falcon and attempt to make it to the surface where Kylo was running the ground operations. Padme would be with Lyric until the situation was under control.

They spent the time running through combat forms, testing their equipment, listening to in-system chatter, trying to discover what was going on before arriving. Just when Lyric thought she would lose her mind, Rey asked the simplest of questions.

"So, what is the story behind you and Hux? Why did you fall for him when you were only a child?"

Poe's back went rigid, and even Chewy seemed uneasy. Lyric felt the gap at the edge of herself grow larger, and her voice sounded very far away.

"There was a man, an evil twisted yet genius of a man, who controlled the futures of all the baby ballerinas with the ballet. He was the artistic director, and no one ever lived up to his exacting standards of perfection. To keep us at our top edge at all times, he introduced restrict or restraint as his training method. Miss a mark during a performance? No water for three days, no food for seven. Forget the routine? Seven days in a box, four feet by four feet. Complain? The beatings were routine and only varied by the amount of anger behind the hand."

"When I was fifteen, I was given a roommate. Supposedly to give us ready-made competition but I'd never had a sibling. She became my sister, my best friend, and for a time, my girlfriend. We loved each other fiercely, and it impacted our dancing. The Master saw the change and noticed our friendship. He couldn't bear to hit me too much, the Force always made sure the favor was returned to him three-fold. So, he took it out on Sabina."
"I endured deprivation worse than I'd ever known, even from Ciara. But the more he took away, the fiercer my dancing became. He had no reason to punish me, and the Force made sure he knew that Karma was keeping score. Two things happened then which the Master didn't plan for. First, I was introduced to Kasen Ruuk, ambassador from Serenno, who knew both my mother and Poe's when they were younger and fighting the Empire. Second, Madam Izzerah became the ballet mistress, sort of a parallel position to the Master."

Lyric stared off into space, as Poe draped his arm around her shoulders, squeezing her tight to give her the strength to hold on and finish the memory. "Then one night, a man came to the ballet. A hideous man, who they said was the Supreme Leader of the First Order. Snoke they called him. The Master fawned at his feet, and I saw the same darkness in both of them. Snoke saw me, and when our eyes met, I saw a vision of myself falling from space in a fighter.

"I was called for, to be introduced to this beastly figure, led over by a young red-hair lieutenant who told me to not be scared. Snoke grabbed my chin, looked me in the eyes and said that I would do nicely. Then I was dismissed. When we returned to the dormitory that night, I was in a single room, and Sabina was with another member of the corp. For months we sneaked around to see each other, and when we were caught the punishments grew wilder and harsher.

"A rumor stared through the company that Snoke's two apprentices were to be at the ballet with him the night of the grand opening. A fallen Jedi and a military genius, he was grooming them as his two arms by which to strangle the galaxy. For this special occasion the ballet would crown a new prima. The main competition was between Sabina and myself."

"Two days before the competition, Sabina came to me and tried to convince me to run away with her. Join the Resistance. She had a connection, could get us off Coruscant and to freedom before the Master would know we were gone. We kissed and I told her I would lose to her and that I loved her. That night she was found hanging in the staircase of the building."

"I was broken, and the Master swooped in like a vulture to pick on my carcass. For weeks I had no sleep, very little food or water, the lights were always left on and a woman stayed with me constantly to keep me from attempting to harm myself. By the night of the opening gala, I was a shell, honed to do one thing and one thing only – capture the eye of one of the two apprentices."

"When the night was over, I was the toast of Galactic City. In a daze I was escorted to the Imperial box. Imagine my shock when the infamous Kylo Ren turned out to be the Ben Solo of my childhood. Then I was introduced to Lt. Armitage Hux, and when we shook hands, I saw that same vision of myself falling from the sky, only this time I saw myself in a bacta tank as this pompous red-head before me sobbed. I looked into his eyes and all I saw was security."

"We began to see each other socially, then he would drop into practices and steal me away. The Master became irritated that Armitage inserted himself so neatly into my life, not knowing the Force was orchestrating things even then. One night, he insisted I perform a move over a hundred and fifty times, each time proclaiming it rubbish, pushing me until it became uncomfortable for those watching. In his anger, he forgot we weren't alone and he struck me several times, hard.

"Madam Izzerah saw everything, and I was immediately taken into her protection. Sent to a medical bay, stripped and the scars photographed and discussed as if I wasn't alive. At the height of my embarrassment, Armitage showed up, having heard of what happened. When he saw the scars, burn marks, the black eyes, his entire demeanor changed. He left without a word, and the next time I saw him was beside my hospital bed as I recuperated from the Master's abuse. It was the first time he asked me to marry him, and when I said no, he asked me to live in the safety of his apartments.

"He had me at the word 'safety'. Madam Izzerah and he had a long conversation and when all was
said and done, I moved into the spare room in Armitage's apartments. At the time he was learning
the political side of the First Order and stationed here, while Kylo was bopping around the universe
looking for dark artifacts for Snoke. Together the Madam and Armitage took down the Master,
exposed what happened to Sabina and stood beside me as he went to trial."

"Then the nightmares started, of the Master coming for me, choking me to prevent me from
speaking, encasing me in concrete to erase my existence. Each more hideous than the last. Each
time, Armitage would hold me, rock me until I awoke, make sure that I recovered with whatever
sanity the Master had left to me. As the old dependence on the Master lessened, my reliance on
Armitage and his strength increased. Then came the day I'd feared since I met Hux."

At this point Poe broke into the conversation. "I'd been hearing rumors about what happened on
Coruscant to Lyric but couldn't get any real confirmation. One night, she came to me in a dream.
Clear as she's standing here right now. Begging me to help her exit the mess she was in. I contacted
my father's youngest brother, Kir and asked him to get her out of Coruscant. He found her sobbing
on the ground with Hux holding a blaster to her head, crying himself."

"Kir managed to get Lyric up and she Force-threw Hux half a block away as they ran to his ship.
Hux was lucky enough to get a shot across Lyric's cheek but Kir got them off the ground. It took
six months before she felt safe anywhere. Almost a year before I saw her smile and mean it."

Lyric's eyes were lost in the past. "I never stopped hoping it wasn't Armitage's own desire to kill
me but didn't know for sure until after the crash. I also didn't find out for years that it was
Armitage who killed the Master, to allow me to leave without being identified as an unattended
minor and arrested. We came to find out the Master had me listed as a servant, a piece of his
property. Ambassador Ruuk went to Serenno and 'found' documents showing my birth registration
as a free child."

Rey looked at Lyric with such compassion Lyric felt ill. She'd never asked for compassion, only
understanding. Such as when she'd asked people not to touch her without permission, it was
because her memories of long bony fingers grabbing at her brought back the screaming. She'd
refused to say his name for so long, as if saying it made him real again, able to touch her again.
Squaring her shoulder, she finished her story.

"SO, I joined the Resistance and learned to fly. Then Armitage had me shot out of the sky and the
rest is history."

"Makes being a scavenger on a desert planet sounds like a much happier place to have grown up." Rey picked up her daughter and began to change her wet diaper. "Did you ever find out what the
connection was between your Master and Snoke?"

"Snoke wanted a test for his boys. When it was determined I knew Kylo, it became Armitage's test
alone. If duty was stronger than love. He didn't like the answer very much."

Poe squeezed his cousin tight. "You should try and get some rest before we get there, Bunny. It
might be awhile before you get the chance again."

"That reminds me, I began teaching Sloan the name game. He has nicknames for us, and for the
Knights. We need nicknames for all of you as well."

Her cousin rolled his eyes. "I can't believe you resurrected that piece of Ciara's madness."

"Hey," Lyric protested. "It saved me more times than I can count. It's a good thing."
"What's the name game?"

"Only people who I trust can approach Sloan and have him come with them. Anyone else, he'll run, scream, call attention to himself, whatever needs to be done to prevent a kidnapping. He went willingly this time because we told him exactly what would happen. We're just trying to keep him from living in a bubble of fear, like we did as children."

Lyric and Rey both settled down to try and meditate together. Lyric focused on the Kybers of both her husband and son, but could get nothing except fear, frustration, and panic. She couldn't figure out why Kylo's Force signature was cloaked as well, and the lack of communication was frustration. All these abilities and no way to contact each other in times of crisis.

Too soon, Poe touched her on the shoulder to let her know they were approaching Serenno. It was time.
Chapter Summary

The ladies arrive at Serenno

Chapter Twenty-two

Hux was awake and working in his office when the Followers made a play for Sloan without trying to free Marab first. They hadn't expected four Knights of Ren, along with Hux himself armed and on duty protecting the boy. The crossfire in the hallways had turned into a ship-wide hunt for any remaining Followers, and deck by deck 'Vindicator' was purged of any traitors as Hux discovered how deeply loyal his staff and troops were.

It soon became apparent each ship in the fleet was undergoing similar mutiny attempts, and from his secured private quarters he directed the efforts while keeping an eye on his son, playing on the floor. Nothing was to be taken for granted as the Followers made their last play for control of the fleet, while the Knights set off explosions at factories all over the planet. That served as the signal for the Serenno Resistance to take matters into their own hands against Jeof Dooku and his Followers.

Marab left to lead the transports down to the planet and so far, they were experiencing moderate fire. Hux had one ear monitoring their progress as the other listened to the chatter around the fleet as ship after ship reported the Followers crushed after hard fighting. As he watched out the window in his office, he was amazed to see the 'Millennium Falon' jump into space behind 'Punisher'.

"Armitage?"

Her voice on the comms device was frantic and he quickly realized what had happened. When the kidnappers came for Sloan, their combined emotions had radiated across the galaxy to terrorize the one person who least needed to be here.

"What are you doing? It isn't safe here!"

The steel in her voice couldn't be masked by the transmission. "I am coming to one of these two ships, which one do you want me to land on? The 'Falcon' has another mission."

"Then come to 'Vindicator' and I will be there to meet you. Come armed."

He slammed the comms board to tell targeting to grab the escape pod coming from the 'Falcon', then stood to get his son. Together, followed by Marcus Ren, they headed for the hanger. Hux kept his blaster in one hand, ready to defend his child against any who were stupid enough to challenge him.

Around him, the ship was recuperating from the intense fighting that occurred on most every deck, and the injuries were multiple and various in intensity. When they entered the hanger, the escape pod was just entering the atmosphere of the bay. He waited impatiently for the beam to settle the pod gracefully on the deck. Two deck hands stepped forward to unseal the airlocks.
Inside, Poe Dameron and his wife were crammed together into the single passenger pod, each laughing like guilty children at the rush of being shot out of a moving ship. Hux stepped over and stared at them as Sloan laughed and clapped his hands.

"Mama!" He shrieked happily.

"Sloan!" She couldn't climb out of the pod fast enough, almost stepping on Dameron's face in her haste to reach her son. "Oh my gods, you both are alive. After days of silence I was going mad."

"What are you doing here? What is he doing here?" Hux nodded at the obviously uncomfortable pilot.

"When neither Rey or myself could get anyone to respond to us, and we heard Sloan screaming through the Force, we couldn't stay away any longer. We loaded everyone up on the 'Falcon' and came to see for ourselves. Now Rey and Chewy have gone to help Kylo and the Knights."

It was then he realized what Lyric wore on her chest. A baby carrier, holding three-month-old Padme Leia Solo, sleeping as though she wasn't just shot across space in a small capsule. Kylo would murder him when he found out where his daughter was and how she got there. Sloan kissed the sleeping child on her head full of black curls.

"Mine," the little boy pronounced proudly.

"No, Sloan. Mea, remember. Her name is Mea." Lyric's soft voice caressed her son's emotions as she pulled him into a hug. "How I've missed you." Standing up, she looked at him with eyes that were shrunken into her head with weariness, and he wondered if she'd slept at all in the previous ten days, if not longer. Smiling he pulled her closer, uncaring of who was watching. He kissed her as if she were a fountain and he parched for her presence. The rest of the universe fell away for a moment and he felt a shift in his own orbit, reorienting to her.

"I am so glad you're home again," he breathed against her cheek.

"What happened here?"

"The Followers attempted to take over the Fleet. They weren't successful, but the damage they inflicted has crippled us severely. The battle on Serenno is going well, and Kylo says the factories have all been disabled if not bombed into dust. They are still looking for Dooku and his aides but know they have him cornered in the palace."

"Are we safe here now?"

"Even if we weren't I would want you here. Our family needs to be together, we've managed apart for far too long. Also, I checked with Kylo. Rey reached him safely and he knows Padme is here. I thought you would want to know."

"Thank you, Armitage. I did want to know. Is there still a spare crib in the nursery?"

He nodded, "Along with Nanny Grace. Dameron, I'll have Phasma assign you some quarters, and introduce you to Captain Torega. Lyric's TIE fighter will be available if you'd like some payback at these assholes. I know you're familiar with flying one."

"Thank you Hux, that exactly what I feel like right now. A little revenge."
Phasma took the Resistance pilot to introduce him to Torega while Hux took his family to their quarters. Grace was thrilled to be reunited with Padme Leia, and they left the two children and the nanny happily playing in the nursery.

Returning to their quarters, Hux grabbed his wife and pulled her close. "I don't have the time or patience to do this the way I wanted."

He was glad she'd worn trousers, knowing she favored the loose, flowing pants when fighting. Sliding his hands underneath the waistband, he stripped both pants and underthings at one time. Then he ripped his hands upward, removing her tunic in the process. She unbuckled his blaster belt, ripping the buttons on his jacket in her haste to strip him.

He turned her over the edge of the table, unable to wait any longer, freeing himself from his pants, to slide into her with one smooth stroke, happy to discover she was sopping wet. It had been almost five months since they'd last been together, and the muscles inside her began to quiver sooner than he'd anticipated. He chuckled in happiness.

"I'm glad to see you've been a good girl."

"Yes sir, I've not even thought about coming without you."

"But you need to now don't you?"

"We both do," she whispered.

Groaning his agreement, he slid one hand down to circle her clit, as she clamped upon his cock, moaning her climax over and over as her cunt milked his own orgasm from him. Clutching her by the hips to grind himself deeper, he cried out her name while the assault on his cock continued as Lyric rolled from one orgasm into another.

At last she lay still beneath him, gasping for breath as he pulled himself gently from inside her. Then pulled her into his arms, kissing her as if it had been years since they'd seen each other instead of months. She finished undressing him as he caressed her face, feasting his eyes upon her after the long drought.

He pushed her back onto the bed, spreading her legs wide to look at her reddened slit, swollen and glistening with their fluids, and groaned again with his own need. Using his hand to tease her, wet her even further, she writhed on his fingers, begging him to stop tormenting and fill her. Instead he used his hand to taunt her, bring her close but refuse to let her fall over the crest. Her eyes pleaded as her hips chased his hand.

"Tell me want you want, my beautiful wife?"

"I want you, always and only."

He stilled his fingers, bringing a pout to her lips. "Tell me everything you want."

"I want you, inside me."

He made one lazy circle on her clit." What else do you want?"

"Never to be away from you again."

"That's a given. What do you want right now?"
Her amber eyes met his and burned with an inner fire that hardened him instantly.

"I want a baby. Give me another baby Armi, your baby."

Groaning, he slowly pushed himself inside her warmth, sliding in and out as she lay back and rubbed her nipples; her body moved with its own need for him. He thought of how long he'd been waiting to be inside her, how desperate he'd been to assure her safety, willing to make a deal with the devil to secure the future. Feeling her legs around his waist, her skin sweating against his as her walls fluttered around him, all he wanted was for this moment to last forever.

"I love you, Lyric. Gods, how I love you."

"I love you too, husband. I've missed you so much."

He could feel her climax building, in the increasing tightness of her cunt and the small shudder of her hips. As she screamed his name over and over, he pumped seed into her for what seemed like forever. At first, neither could breathe, could only stare at each other, using the love in their eyes. He collapsed down to the bed beside her. Content to pull her close, run his fingers through her hair.

He didn't know when they fell asleep, only when he awoke to find his wife gently riding his cock, her need for him so consuming it pulled at his heart, letting her take whatever she needed to find herself after this catastrophe. She soared into another climax, and he felt his balls pull tight against his groin as he shot upward into her.

This time, as she panted beside him on the bed, he pulled a datapad over to catch up on the battle. Serenno was in flames, and Kylo and Rey had Jed Dooku trapped inside the Count's palace. Marab had done as he promised and secured the landing zones. For the moment, the war could do without it's leader. He set the datapad back on the table. Besides, keeping her safe was almost a full time job.

Lyric lay beside him, lovelier than he'd ever seen her. Reaching into the drawer on his side of the bed, he pulled out a bottle of lube. Smiling evilly at his wife, he rubbed his hand over her ass.

"Feeling adventurous?"

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Marab sat on the tarmac for a long moment, watching the fighting going around him and wondering what the hell he was doing in the midst of this shit. True he'd been in the First Order since he'd been identified as a talented pilot at a young age, but this was the first military action he'd found himself in the middle of during an actual battle. He was ready for his debt to be declared paid and to head off for unknown space.

Preparing to head back to 'Vindicator', he thought about Lyric and Sloan. Was this going to be enough to save them from Dooku and his madness. He'd heard over the comms that the factories were all in flames, and the First Order-led Resistance was winning the day in all areas of the planet. Kylo Ren was ready to confront Dooku and things were looking up for them.

So why did he feel like something was very wrong?

Maybe it was the appearance of the 'Millennium Falcon' that alerted him to the danger, or hearing chatter over the comms, but he gradually realized that if Kylo Ren's wife was on Serenno, there was a better than average chance Lyric was here. Sealing the 'Kestrel', he raced toward the 'Falcon', running smack into Rey.
"What the hell are you doing here?" she growled at him. "You should be in a jail cell."

"Yeah, well we all should be somewhere other than here. Please tell me Lyric isn't in that ship?"

"Of course not. She's on 'Vindicator', safe with Hux."

"Where are the Knights, where is Paden Ren?"

"He's here on Serenno with the other Knights?"

"Are you certain?"

"No, why?"

"Because he's a traitor! He's a Follower, one of Dooku's higher officers. He's going to betray her, has been planning to for months."

"Oh shit, come with me."

Rey raced for Kylo Ren, Marab right beside her. He prayed they could get to the radio in time. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a shuttle touching down on the landing strip near his ship. Grabbing Rey's arm, they watched as the Knight marched down the ramp, a limp Sloan Hux in his arms, toward a waiting sled.

As Kylo ran to meet them on the tarmac, Marab realized they had to follow the traitor, or Sloan was lost. He turned to the two Jedi.

"I'm going after him. Hux has a transmitter on the boy. Get the frequency and follow us. He's taking the boy back to the castle."

"The castle is on fire," Kylo shouted.

"There are labs and dungeons deep under that place Dooku could barricade himself for centuries under there. If they get into those bolt holes with Sloan, we'll never find him again."

Rey and Kylo looked at each other. Kylo nodded at Marab, "Do you know how to get there?"

"I do."

"Well then, I guess you're coming with us."

They followed Marab to the far side of the landing field, then through a small grove of evergreen trees bordering the backside of the Dooku estate. There was a steel door set in the hill side, and Paden Ren stood there, limp Sloan cradled on his shoulder. The Knight was waiting for them.

"You know he wants her too, Marab," the Knight threw at him. "Bring her to him, and the Master will let her leave with you after he gets what he requires."

"How could you do this to her, Paden? You stood there and pledged to save them both and here you are turning that baby over to those monsters. I know how you feel about her, why do this?"

The Knight sneered at him. "Stood there and watched her bloom under that sadistic fuck's tutelage you mean. How could you bear it, knowing his hands were on her, touching her. She's a Jedi goddess, a warrior in the Force, she's should be worshiped, pure and chaste."

"Like you don't want her yourself. Don't lie Paden, we all can see the emotions in your eyes."
"I would worship her, not chain her and debase her."

"Let the boy go, Paden," Rey implored. "He's the true innocent in all of this."

"I won't let him get hurt," the Knight promised her. "I love the boy. But he's the only bait that she'll follow."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Just a sleep potion, nothing dangerous. We had to silence his Force-signature until ready for her. He'll awaken soon in his new quarters."

"I'm afraid I can't let that happen." As Kylo and Rey took out Paden Ren, Marab dived for the boy, catching him before his limp body could hit the ground. The three of them took off for the 'Kestrel', unsure if Dooku had any back-up to come after them. Once inside, Rey took Sloan, using her Force abilities to search the boy for injuries or poisons. After she assured the two men Sloan was only drugged, they discussed what to do next.

"Dooku is in those tunnels, and it would take a cannon to blast him out of that mountain. Got anything up on those destroyers that would do the job?"

Kylo laughed as he pulled his wife into his arms. "More than enough things, but a few would destroy the whole planet. We need to meet with the Resistance leaders and find out how they want to handle this. We cannot destroy Serenno to kill one man."

Rey spoke up, "I think we should return Sloan to his mother. Then I can check on Padme and the Serenno leaders. How do we assure Dooku doesn't manager to sneak off the planet?"

Marab looked at the pale, sleeping face of her son and knew there was only one answer.

"I know the tunnel system. I'll make sure no one escapes."

He wasn't prepared for the stares from the other two.
Chapter Twenty-three

When Hux awoke, he looked around confused for a moment as to what was going on. It had been so long since he'd slept well, a fog covered his thoughts. Then he felt someone move alongside his naked body. Quickly he realized it was his wife, naked as well and covered with his essence. Then it all came back to him.

She was here. Just as actions were reaching a fever pitch on Serenno, the Force had dropped his wife back into his arms. Seeing her, loving her, letting his emotions free to show how much she meant to him – it went against his nature to be so public with his state of mind, but as he pulled her close again, he wanted to shout to the universe of his love for her.

They'd made love many times, both hoping for another child, both wanting to bind their love further, wanting another chance to show that motherless children could rise above and change the course of the galaxy. As he slipped soundlessly out of bed, pulling on a pair of sleeping pants, he discovered there was a nagging sense in the back of his mind of something not right.

He stood in the shower and held his hands against the wall, head down, trying to figure out what was wrong. Lyric was here, and fine. Sloan was in his room along with Padme Solo. Stepping out of the shower, he toweled off then wrapped the towel around his hips. Opening the door, he first checked on his wife. She was still asleep, curled in a ball now that his warmth had left the bed.

Pulling on his pants, he threw a clean shirt around his shoulders and padded down the hall to the nursery. As he drew closer to the door, he noticed it was open and the lights on inside. Cautiously he pushed the door the rest of the way open. Then his heart crashed through the durasteel deck.

Sloan was gone.

Poor Grace, the nanny lay on the floor, throat slit, while Padme Solo slept in the crib only feet away. Sloan's bed was empty, and Paden Ren who had relieved Marcus Ren earlier, was missing. As he stood there pondering this betrayal, the littlest member of the family made her presence known. Hux moved purely on instincts to pick up the squalling baby, change her diaper, and to check the freezer pack Lyric brought with her for Padme's bottle.

Taking the now happy baby with him back to his office, he flicked his comms device and punched Kylo's frequency. The Supreme Leader answered at once.

"Please tell me you have Lyric and my daughter?"

Hux laughed bitterly. "I've gained a daughter and lost a son apparently."

"Not really." Kylo's voice had a humor to it Hux had never heard. "Rey and I managed to save
Sloan from a traitorous Knight."

"Ren, I owe you one."

"Just take care of Padme until we arrive. We're meeting the Resistance here shortly. Dooku is holed up under the castle and according the Marab, could hide down there for years and we wouldn't be able to pull him out. Decisions need to be made, because I don't want to bomb the planet into another Jakku."

"Agreed. Ren, how is my son?"

"Drugged, but fine. Rey has him and won't put him down. Apparently, she and Lyric have made a pact about making sure our children know their mothers kick ass and fight hard, and to raise each other's child if anything happens to either one. They went through quite a lot together back on Naboo, and their bond is deep and real. She even told Rey about Sabina."

"Really? That's interesting. She won't say her name around me."

"She didn't make it all the way through the tale. I'll have to fill in the details Lyric neglected."

"But still, that's the first time she's said anything about that time period to anyone. It's a step forward the doctors didn't think would happen."

"Do you want to come down and retrieve Sloan, maybe take Rey with you back to 'Vindicator'?"

"I'll get back to you on that. Where's the smuggler?"

"Gone into the tunnels to find Dooku. Trying to help us capture him alive, so we can find out what he knows about Lyric that makes her and Sloan so special."

"Shit."

"Yeah," Kylo drawled. "I'd think the boy has a death wish if it hadn't been so hard to kill him. His one request was to keep Lyric and Sloan far from Dooku and Serenno."

"That I can agree with."

When Hux walked into his bedroom, she was still asleep and he thanked whatever god had made that possible. The moment she awoke and realized Sloan was on Serenno, even though wrapped in his Aunt Rey's loving arms, she'd be there before he could radio ahead to stop her. Padme was finishing her bottle and looking at him with unfamiliar hazel eyes. He glanced down and smiled.

"Well little Mea, what should we do now?"

From his office he paged Phasma to come clean up the nursery and let the nanny's next of kin be notified. Then he asked for Poe Dameron to be sent to him as soon as he was available. While waiting he began scanning the damage reports and loss of personnel for the Follower's incursion again the Fleet. Preliminary numbers were not as bad as they could have been. Most explosive devices had been discovered before they could go off, and they even had video of several members setting them.

Dameron knocked on the door and waited for Hux to acknowledge him. He waved the pilot in and finished up with the requisitions he had to push through immediately. Then he set the datapad aside.
"Dameron, Rey and Kylo Ren managed to intercept Paden Ren with Sloan. They drugged my son," his knuckles cracked loudly as he attempted to remain calm, "but Rey has him and I know she will protect him with her life. Just as Lyric would protect Padme. But now I have no one I trust to watch Lyric while I crush this asshole down on the planet. Given all that, I have one question to ask, can you guard my wife until this shit is over, or do I need to find that traitorous storm trooper you're friends with and ask him?"

"Hux, I told you before. We're family now. Of course I'll watch Lyric and Padme while you head down to get Sloan. Just make sure you either kill that Dooku asshole or he's never in any position to threaten her again."

Nodding, Hux asked Phasma to call down to the hanger to ready the Field Marshall's shuttle for a trip to Serenno. Dameron took Padme from him, and he looked in on Lyric before leaving. Exhaustion had caught up with her at last, and she slept the deep slumber of one who'd pulled from their own resources for far too long. He kissed her forehead, whispering his love to her as she rolled and sighed before dropping back into her dreams.

He then went to the wall safe in their bedroom, removing his second blaster and checking the charge. Turning to leave, he met Poe eye to eye.

"Thank you again, Dameron. Family can be strangers as long as they find common ground in the family."

As he raced to join his shuttle, he felt the core of his being hardening to metal. There would be no mercy given to these traitors, members of the First Order or not. They'd threatened the life of his wife, of his son, and they'd tried to kill him once already. Were they bold enough to try again, or would they send an envoy?

The shuttle lifted off from the deck and slid gracefully out into space, bearing toward the planet. The computer told him the moments before landing, counting down the distance to the firm dirt of the planet. Upon landing, the ramp opened and Kylo Ren met him, Sloan in Rey's arms.

Sloan quickly struggled out of Rey's arms and into his father's. Hux felt tears pricking at the corners of his eyes and he closed them to try and will them away. Sloan touched his father's neck, wanting his attention.

"I'm sorry, Sloan. I can't reach my stone right now. Can you talk to me by showing me a picture?"

His son let loose with a stream of what had happened, how Paden Ren had killed the nanny, but Sloan refused to let him near Padme. Of being forced to swallow a nasty potion which made him sleep. Of thinking Kylo and Rey were his parents come to save him and being terrified for his mother, of the guilty release of happiness that it was not his parents but Padme's. But mainly, Sloan wanted to know his mother was alright.

Hux calmed his son's fears, pulling the small boy into a hug. "Your mother is on 'Vindicator', in our bedroom, sleeping. Your cousin Poe is with her, he helped raise your mother. We'll tell her about this later, when she wakes up. Why did you agree to go with Paden Ren after he revealed himself as false?"

"Because he said he'd hurt Padme if I didn't."

"Oh, my poor son." Hux pulled him tight again, his heart easing at the feel of small arms around his own neck.
On the shuttle back the 'Vindicator', Hux sat, his arms around his sleeping son. As the airlock cycled and they walked down the ramp, Poe Dameron and Lyric stood there waiting for them. When she saw Sloan, her legs gave out and she sank to the deck. Hux hurried over to her, Sloan twisting out of his arms to return to his mother.

Her tears ceased as she pulled their son close and then pulled Hux in as well. It took some time before she was able to speak. Sloan put his hand on her stone and replayed the same information to his mother he'd given to his father. When he was finished, she was livid, and her eyes were scary. Hux remembered the conversations he'd had with Ren in the past about her Sith eyes.

Originally, he'd thought her eyes brown, but when they'd met on opening night, he realized they were amber. When she was warm and loving, they reminded him of honey. But when she was pissed, they turned Sith yellow, no doubt about it. At this moment, realizing Paden's betrayal, he could see the steam rising from her shoulders.

"Armitage," she growled. "I really, really want to kick someone's ass."

"Please, my love, leave that to me. I know you want someone a little more personal but let Ren and I handle this."

Slowly her eyes moderated, and her breathing leveled out. At last she nodded, pulling Sloan up with her. While words were still beyond her, she managed to convey her fear through her face.

"We have four divisions ready to hammer that mountain and the passages underneath with several heavy matter cannons. There is nowhere for him to escape. Just take care of yourself and Sloan. I promise to be back soon."

He escorted her back to their quarters, now cleaned and with the nanny's body removed. Sloan didn't want to be separated from his mother, so Dameron promised to look after them as Hux grabbed his cloak and gloves from the table beside the door. As he turned to go, she suddenly ran from the other room, throwing her arms around him, lips searing heat onto his. He pulled her tight, reluctant to leave.

At last she let him go, but her eyes refused to meet his. He grabbed her chin, and realized she was afraid, afraid he wouldn't come back, and so was refusing to say good-bye. Smiling at her superstitious nature, he kissed her cheek then turned hard on his heel and returned to the hanger. He could feel the Kyber around his neck burning with her emotions, and Sloan's love. As the shuttle neared the landing field, he saw the 'Kestrel' sitting there, waiting for her pilot.

When Ren told him Marab volunteered to go into the tunnels after Dooku, Hux half expected the man to turn around once Ren was gone and leave. He was having a harder and harder time understanding what made the smuggler tick. Obviously, his unhealthy obsession with Lyric was driving this is some manner, but Hux knew that was a dead path. Once the man laid hands on Sloan, any feelings Lyric might have had disappeared in the blast furnace of her emotions.

He met Rey and Kylo at the landing strip. The matter cannons were all in position, only waiting for negotiations to fail. Hux keyed the frequency for Marab that Lyric had given him.

"Marab," come the quiet reply.

"It's Hux. Do you have his location yet?"

"Oh yeah. He's got quite the setup down here."

"Can we reach him from the surface with anything we have? You know the First Order arsenal as
well as I do."

"If we can get the matter cannons in the right positions, we can take this whole complex down. Do you have any engineer I can upload this diagram I've used to get here?"

"Send it to me, and we'll route it to engineering. Are you in a safe position?"

"For the moment. I'll let you know if that changes."

"All right, we’ll be back with the engineers."

As Hux went to click off he heard another question. "Is she safe?"

"For now, yes."

"All right then, just make sure you keep it that way."

Marab broke the connection, and Hux wondered what the man would have done if Lyric had managed to make her way onto the planet. At least she had the presence of mind to stay put on the ship.

Calling for the engineers, he showed them Marab's map, then got the smuggler on the line to discuss the preparations. Within three hours, he had the false Count surrounded and was ready to open a channel.

"This is Field Marshall Armitage Hux, and I would like to speak with the man who calls himself Jeof Dooku."

A deep baritone voice answered him. "So Brendol's bastard has come to see what his attack beasts are fighting. Should I be flattered?"

"We have you surrounded, on many levels Dooku. Surrender now and we might be moved toward leniency if you cooperate with the First Order."

"What could I have you want?"

"The truth."

There was a long pause. Then Dooku chuckled. "Ah, so you don't trust your own wife. How sad. Created to rule the universe yet she is content to love you. Where did I go wrong?"

Hux snarled back. "I trust her implicitly. Yet you claim to have knowledge of her paternity that Lyric herself doesn't possess. I wish to evaluate this information, to see if it is worth disturbing her rest."

"In other words, you want to know who raped Ciara Bey?"

"Is that who her father is, or just a convenient story her mother came up with to explain whatever you assholes did to her?"

"This is a delicate, and complicated tale. Why don't you come down and we'll discuss it?"

"I may have been born a bastard, but I wasn't born stupid. You come up here and talk to us all you want. None of us will come hunt you."

"Shame, young Hux. You obviously are a smarter man than your father. Well, let's just say, when
it comes to Lyric, I was the man charged to rape Ciara to help cover up what really happened in that lab. But as to her father, only the Force knows the answer to that question."

"You have nowhere to run Dooku. The planet has been liberated, your supporters slaughtered in space and here on the planet. Again, I give you the option – Surrender or die."

"Then I guess we'll all die together."

The mountain exploded in the blink of an eye.
Lyric fell to her knees, the suddenly silence in her head reminding her of the night on Coruscant when Armitage was shot. Something down on Serenno was terribly wrong, and she didn't know how to cope. Shoving Sloan at Dameron, she raced from the room and down to the flight deck. The captain saw her coming, smiles becoming frowns at the intense yellow glare of her anger.

"Lady Hux, you aren't allowed to leave the ship at this time."

"Something has happened down on the planet, and I think the Field Marshall is in serious danger. So, either shoot me now, or come with me but don't stand between me and that fighter, Captain."

Torega chewed his lip for a moment, then called to the squad mechanic. "Teenth, call the boys, let them know I'm escorting Lady Hux to Serenno to investigate a possible explosion endangering Field Marshall Hux. Send them down but tell the regular squad to continue guarding the Fleet, as Sloan is still on 'Vindicator'."

The two TIE fighters sped down to the landing strip, only to be confronted with a disaster of a magnitude they hadn't suspected. The matter cannons had exploded the mountain into millions of tons of debris landing back where moments before had been a mountain range. Not to mention the concussion from the canons' kick back. Only now, several long minutes after the explosion were the injured beginning to regain consciousness.

As she ran across the tarmac, she saw Kylo removing rock from an area nearby. Changing direction, she screamed his name

"Lyric, help me. Rey is under here, along with Armitage. I need your help to lift all this and time is running out."

She took a deep breath and focused.

*****

All Hux could breathe was dirt. Taking a handkerchief out of his pocket he managed to fashion a mask over his nose and mouth. It helped somewhat, enough he could take stock of what the hell happened. He was buried under debris, that much he could figure. Last thing he remembered was the matter cannon all firing at once. Dooku must have detonated his own explosion of some unknown compound to great this level of devastation.

After the roaring noise in his ears began to abate, he realized he could hear another person close at hand, coughing. When he turned his head, the Lady Rey was about three feet from his left side, blood crusting on her head and face.

"Rey," he called, "Rey can you hear me?"

"Hux?" Her voice was thin but steady.

"I'm here. Do you know where Ren is?"
"He was behind me but the concussion could have blown us apart. Can you move?"

"My arms and upper body yes. My right leg seems to be trapped under something. How about you?"

"There's something trapping my left side."

"So what do we do now?"

"Hux, I guess this is a bad time to mention it, but I have really bad claustrophobia. Please keep talking to me, let me know I'm not alone."

"Certainly. What happened?"

"I was scavenging in one of the old destroyers when I fell, broke my arm. Ended up trapped until I could dig my way free. I've never been able to handle confined spaces since."

He listened to the story, wondering what it was like to have to scrap old wrecks for the means to eat that day. This was the inequality the First Order wanted to change. "How young can you remember?"

"Too young. Four or five, I think."

"Kylo told me you spoke with Lyric about Sabina."

"Sounds like Lyric had as miserable a childhood as the rest of us."

"Living with Sabina was the only normal time in her childhood. Ciara was a paranoid mess according to Kylo, moving every few months to hide from her rapist. Half the time Lyric didn't know where her mother was, only Dameron and his parents. Once they were killed, he tried to keep her under control, but Lyric can be a force of nature when she gets her mind set."

"You truly love her, don't you?"

"Since the moment I walked into that hospital and saw the damage that twisted asshole inflicted upon her. She tells everyone the scars are from the fire and crash on Yavin, but some of the older ones are from Piccus. He was a sick, evil man. Worse than Snoke in some regards. Probably why they go along so well."

"I think Lyric's here, on Serenno."

"Why do you say that?"

"I can sense her and Ben, both trying to move this earth off of us."

"I can't decide what to make of all this Force ability. She never talked about it before."

"She never needed it before. But like Anakin told her, she needs to embrace her inner Jedi. There's a reason both of Snoke's apprentices fell for peaceful Jedi."

Hux had to laugh at that. "Lyric may be a Jedi inside, but she's not very peaceful. She's got a mean left hook. Trust me."

"Lyric is more like Anakin, filled with pure emotions. It shows when she dances. While I'm a child of the Force as well, I think things through, and Ben is the impulsive one."
"That's an understatement." Hux muttered.

Rey laughed. "I know, but he and I balance each other, just as one day Sloan and Padme will balance each other. Even you and Lyric have a balance, when you're together and working as a team. She hates being away from you. She thinks you work too much and don't take care of yourself."

"I could say the same thing about her. She's a perfectionist, but I can't fault her for that. Piccus drilled it into her until she doesn't even realize she's doing it."

"Piccus, was that the Master name?"

"Yes. You'll never hear her say his name. She thinks if she says it, he'll come back from the grave and haunt her. But he's the name behind her nightmares, her own Snoke so to speak."

The air gradually began to cool, and both found they could breathe easier. Hux wished he could see his watch, see how long they'd been trapped, but decided he didn't want to know.

"Rey?"

"Yes, Hux?"

"Did you truly kill Snoke?"

"No, Kylo used Anakin's saber, which Snoke had taken from me. We did it together, to free everyone. Then you came, and we had to separate quickly. Ben told the only story he could at the time. He was angry at me for not staying, and I was angry at him for demanding we rule, be Snoke ourselves. It was later we both realized what our balance meant to the Galaxy. After you left Crait, then discovered Lyric while looking for me and Leia, I contacted him through our Force bonds. That was the beginning."

He lay back, remembering the horror as he'd watched that fighter slid through space to Yavin 4. How her chest had jumped when they sparked the paddles to re-start her heart, and how he'd cried, that first night, when they'd told him she might not make it. From the first moment he'd seen her, on stage at the ballet while his own Master made lewd comments to her torturer, he'd been in love.

Her pain always seemed to match his own, not matter what happened, and her love fit into his heart and made him complete. Whether it was fate, or the Force, or whatever, that put them together, he would bless it forever. She truly did astound and complete him.

At last, the rubble over their heads disappeared, and two exhausted faces greeted them. Lyric was shaking from the unaccustomed mental exertion and Kylo threw his arms around Rey and refused to let her go. As his wife sank down to the dirt beside him, Hux pulled her into his lap, unwilling to be separated from her another instant. All round them people were being dug out from the rubble and the long process of ending Dooku's tyranny on Serenno was beginning.

Kylo carried Rey toward Hux's shuttle, while Hux himself leaned on his wife as his right ankle appeared to be bruised. She'd taken her belt and two pieces of wood to fashion him a temporary splint. Once on the shuttle, the four of them raced back to 'Vindicator'.

As soon as the shuttle touched the deck, the ramp descended. Lyric and Rey ran down first, eyes seeking their children. Poe stood with Marcus Ren near the central command with both Sloan and Padme. Kylo walked toward his daughter with terror in his eyes, and Rey laughed as he held the tiny infant for the first time. The three of them drifted off as Hux put his arm around Lyric and Sloan.
Once back in their quarters, Lyric bathed Sloan while Hux checked out his injuries from being buried alive. Sloan refused to sleep apart from his parents, so they brought his bed into their bedroom, and they stayed with him until he was good and asleep.

Lyric stripped and was headed for the shower when he crept up behind her, scooping her into his arms and into the shower. He made sure the jets were a gentle rain shower to protect their bruised bodies, and she moaned as the warmth soaked into her muscles. Pouring shampoo into his hands, he gently washed her hair then his own.

Five minutes later he had her pinned against the shower wall, her legs around his waist as he gently pumped into her, both of them crying tears of release. When he came, for a moment he felt invincible. When they finally emerged from their bathroom, they found Sloan still sleeping peacefully in his crib. Keeping the lights night dark, they crawled into bed.

Six weeks later, Lyric was exhausted, trying to keep up with one rambunctious toddler and all the appearances scheduled for her by the First Order PR department. Since Serenno, Poe was his cousin's security now, along with Marcus and Kiva Ren. As more and more systems joined peacefully into the Order, Poe found the Order embracing some of the teachings of the Resistance as well. That convinced him to stay with the only family he had left, and to renew his acquaintance with Bella Hux.

When she couldn't muster the energy to get up one morning, Hux called for a doctor.

"Well, it would appear congratulations are in order, Field Marshall, Lady Hux."

"Excuse me?"

"You're pregnant again, Lady Hux. Not quite the two years we would have preferred, but you seem more stable physically, and we'll be keeping close tabs again on your blood pressure."

Armitage and Lyric smiled at each other, remembering their reunion in the skies above Serenno. She spoke up for both of them. "This time we'd like to know the sex as soon as possible."

"Of course, my lady."

He left them alone to contemplate the future. Obviously, they were headed for Coruscant to resume government duties, but Ren and Rey were going to Naboo to live. Poe was with her, and he was learning to live with the pilot's off beat sense of humor. But there was something missing in her eyes, and he knew what it was.

The next morning, he took Lyric down to the flight deck. Her TIE fighter was fueled and ready to go. She looked at it, confusion in her eyes.

"Let's go somewhere. Your cousin is watching Sloan and you're feeling down. The doctor gave his blessing for a short hop somewhere to put some color on your cheeks."

The grin on her face spread from ear to ear. "You trust me to pilot us, just me?"

He nodded. "I do. Where are you taking us?"

"To see a cabin I purchased."

She set the controls for Naboo, then looked at Hux in the gunner's seat. "Armitage, what is my role going to be with the First Order now that peace is coming to the galaxy?"
"You can make it whatever you'd like, my love. You've shown a flair for administration, diplomacy, military logistics; I'd say you've earned the right to be whoever you want."

"I like the cultural diplomat Ren setup when I was pregnant with Sloan. I'd like to start a program to spread music and dance throughout the systems. Not specific music, the music of each system and their own native dances. Music is universal and passes through boundaries that color, race, sex, and other physical difference make worse."

"That's an interesting idea. Sports would also be a good idea. Why don't you put together a proposal Ren and I can study together. Be sure to think of ways to fund the program each system could afford. The First Order can offer support, and small monetary assistance, but these need to be programs that even poor systems can find the means to afford."

"All right. I can do that."

"Of course you can. After Serenno, I'm convinced you can do anything you set your mind to."

"But I still need you, always will. You know that, don't you?"

"After watching you choke a man with your mind, it does make it hard to be the protector of the family. But I also know your personality. Your love makes you submit to my wishes, and my love makes sure you are protected and cherished. You once gave me three conditions before you would marry me, do you remember them?"

"Don't lie to me. Don't cheat on me. Don't hit me. Then you broke two out of three and I left. But I put them back in place when we reconciled."

"I know you did. And I believe I'm at 100% since then."

"You are."

"I have three conditions for you."

She smiled, wishing she could see his eyes. "What are they?"

"Don't ever leave me again not ever, not even overnight. When we separate bad things seem to happen to us both. Where you go, I will go. It's much easier for me to move around the galaxy than you think."

"I promise never to leave you ever."

"Second, don't ever cheat on me again. When I first found out about Kez Marab I tried to reason it away, say that you were only out for revenge. Then that asshole called me, and told me ever lurid detail of your affair, and I realized how deeply it broke me inside. I've been faithful, and I plan to continue that until death do us part."

She put her hand over her heart. He closed his eyes as she spoke.

"I promise to never, ever cheat on you again, in the knowledge you will never cheat on me. Whatever we need, we will find it in each other only."

"Third, don't get so wrapped up in work your forget our children. They are the most important part of us. Remember how it felt to have an absent mother and be there when they need you. And when I need you."
She fell into a long silence, and for a moment he panicked. At last her voice filled the fighter. "I am three things. A woman, a wife, a mother. The first is who I am, and I cannot change my physical nature. The woman in me loves you without hesitation and promises to love you and need you as much if not more than you need and love me."

"The second is what I am, as seen by the laws and eyes of the galaxy. What I am is also defined by you and me. As my husband, only you have the right to override my decisions and actions. I will never argue with you in public, and I will support you as none other. But if we disagree in private, that is between us alone, and will be resolved as we see fit."

"The third is what I have chosen for myself. I know many people think I'm a gold-digger or a bimbo, or even a witch. But I'm simply a woman who fell in love and wants what every woman wants: love, security, a family. You've given all those things to me, and so much more. How could I ever abandon my children when they are the greatest gift you've ever given me?"

When they fell out of hyper-space, and into the atmosphere of Naboo, he almost laughed out loud. However, they avoided the cities and headed for the remote mountains outside of there. She deftly put the TIE down behind a small, remote lake, with a sprawling low oak and stone building on the other side.

Exiting the cramped fighter, both stretched their long legs after the extended flight. Taking her hand, he began the walk around to the house.

"What precipitated this purchase?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "One day Sloan will have to come train with Mea. I can't bear the thought of being separated from my child, so I went ahead and found a place we can call home when we aren't being Mr. and Mrs. Field Marshall. A real home."

Picking her up, Armitage carried her across the threshold of their home. Inside, the furnishings were a tasteful mix of his sense of order and her need for mementos. Everything had a scrubbed clean sense of freshness. Room by room they checked out the cabin. Four bedrooms plus a master suite, along with an additional guest house. Stables, the lake, several other out buildings, it was a self-sustaining farm, and he was proud of her foresight.

When they reached the master suite, he could restrain himself no longer.

"Time to christen the bedroom don't you think?"

She looked up at shyly, then removed her cape, draping it over the back of a chair. She then began a striptease, wiggling her hips suggestive in front of him. It was days like this he hated the riding boots of their uniform, hard to remove quickly. By the time he was nude, she was on the bed, kneeling the way he liked. Sliding onto the bed beside her, he could smell the proof of her ardor.

"I'd hoped you'd plant a baby inside me here, but you beat me to it," she murmured as he slid one hand between her legs to see how wet she was. "Seems my children are destined to have one foot in the stars and one on land."

Pulling her into his arms, Hux laughed gently. "Seems about right. Masters of the Universe."

She shook her head. "No, Sloan will have Mea, but what about this child?"

"This is will be our child, not one claimed by the Force. They can be whatever they want to be."

He slid quietly inside her, kisses along her neck soon changing her melancholy to giggles and
moans. As she rose higher and higher on her way to bliss, he bent close to her ear.

"Come for me Lyric."

She fell over the crest and into the flood of her body. Quivering around his cock, the tightness of her cunt pulling his own orgasm out of him in response. Afterward, they lay on the bed, staring at each other content for the time being.

For the first time in four years, the Force was still.
After the Fall

Chapter Summary

What came after the Fall of Serenno for Kez Marab

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Epilogue - What Came After The Fall of Serenno

For months he floated in a bacta tank, while his dreams were filled with her. An alternative life, where she chose him and they flew off to find a home on some small backwater planet where no one had ever heard of the First Order and Armitage Hux. A beautiful life, where she gave him a beautiful daughter with those amazing amber eyes and he died at a ripe old age in her arms. A life lived as he struggled to keep the real one functioning. When at last the doctors brought him around, almost a year had passed since the mountain fell on top on him and crushed his dreams.

The first thing he asked for was an update. They simply handed him a datapad and away he went. Her's was the first name he searched. Imagine his surprise when he saw a days old picture of her with her family, including the newest additional, a sweet baby girl named Mara. He stared at her, at the beautiful new title behind her name as well: Empress. Hux and Ren had divided out responsibilities and the two Jedi were now responsible for bringing balance to the Force throughout the galaxy while the Emperor and Empress took care of the political and social problems, and his old friend Poe Dameron was chief adviser to the Empress.

It took a while before he was walking again and even longer before he was released, but he had plenty to catch up on while he waited. Especially what had happened that day when everything went to shit. According to the official inquiry, when Hux set off the cannons, Dooku has ignited a large kiloton conventional weapon underneath the mountain, causing the entire ground to rupture before returning to the ground over all those trapped in the way. He read about Ren and Lyric saving not only their spouses but hundreds of others by translating the ground away from on top of them. If only he had been closer to Hux, he might not have missed a year of his life learning how to live again.

The 'Kestrel' was currently resting in dock, waiting for him to return, and when he finally opened the airlock more than sixteen months had passed and his breath caught in his throat at how much he'd missed his ship. As he stood there a faint whiff of lavender assaulted him, and the flood gate broke open. Sliding down the side of the curved wall, he sobbed, he screamed, he railed at the universe for bring her into his path. But mostly he mourned for what might have been.

It took him several days to clear out the cobwebs both from the ship and his mind. Therefore it took him longer than it should have to notice the blinking light on his command board that told him there was a message for him on his personal com. The com to which only She had access.

He sat down and stared at it for a long time. He knew if he were smart, he would simply push the 'Erase' function and move on. All debts were paid between them, why dredge up pain when it
would serve no purpose except to remind him of what he'd had and lost. Finding himself stronger than he thought, he got up and went back to checking supplies, preparing for a departure, though he had no idea where. It was another hour before he finally lost the battle and sat down in his chair, took a deep breathe and listened.

It was her. The date stamp was only two months previous, right around the time she'd given birth.

"Kez, it's Lyric. I don't know why I'm calling this number, my head knows your dead but my heart doesn't want to believe it. You were right you know, I do love you. I've love you since the moment you first laid your hand on me if I were to be honest, which apparently I'm choosing to do now that I know you're gone and it won't matter anyway. I denied it until I realized that you no longer out wandering through the universe was a thought I couldn't handle and I broke down to call the number of a dead man and ramble on as I cry softly while hiding in a closet. I love you Kez. and I hope wherever you are you've found peace that you couldn't find here in life. Maybe there's a version of me there for you to love, that would make me happy. I want you to be happy. Wherever you are, I hope you're happy."

He could hear her sobs now, her words growing harder to understand. "I couldn't say this to you when you were alive, because it wasn't worth the pain. But if I had met you first, I would have chosen you. I would have chosen you, you crazy asshole. Shit, I thought I could do this and get it out once and for all but it hurts Kez. It hurts so damn much. You aren't here, and that isn't right and it hurts."

A baby cried in the background, and he heard a voice that had to be Sloan call her 'Mama' as she tried to get her tears under control. 'Coming honey boy' he heard her say in an aside. Then she returned to his message.

"Kez, I hope I have the strength to not call again. This is painful, and I don't think I can do this. But if it means I can hear the recording with your voice, then you know I will, because I'm weak, but you know that. It's what brought you back. I can handle a lot, but giving up you is becoming harder than I thought. But reality intrudes, in the form of Sloan and now Mara, named in your memory. You're gone, but she reminds me of you. She has my eyes, and curly brown hair. We aren't sure whose side that came from, and Sloan is about to be three. I'm going to hang up now. If I know what's good for me, this will be the last time. I love you Kez, and believe it or not, I wish you were alive, so I could tell you. Good bye"

There was a beep, indicating another message. This one was from his connection in the palace, Sergeant Tollard. It was date stamped three days previous.

"I know you're alive boy and someday here soon you might feel like listening to your messages and I have it from the object of your delusions that she left a whopper of a confession on there. Don't ask how I know and don't question what I'm about to say, just decide what you're going to do about this intel and call me back. Here it is: She said to tell you and I quote 'If he can find me, then he can tell me how he feels himself. He should know where I am.' She then took her children and left Naboo. The Emperor is, in a word, livid. He doesn't know you're alive, yet. Key word there is yet. I don't know what Hux did, but apparently it's a whopper. Here's your one and only chance to tell Lyric how you feel. Son, don't fuck it up?"

Marab leaned back in his chair and looked out toward the stars. Did he know where she was? He began to think about their relationship, things and places that were important in their genesis and realized, he knew exactly where she and the children had gone. He'd keyed the coordinates into the computer before he realized it. Pausing he thought for a long moment. Thought about legs that were long and felt amazing wrapped around his waist, thought about the way she fit perfectly
against his body and found himself growing hard for the first time since the fall of Serenno. He sealed the door and unclamped the 'Kestrel' from the moorings where she'd sat for way too long. As he broke through the atmosphere into the beckoning blackness of space, he sent a text message to her private channel, the one she always had.  
'T'm coming for you. Ready or not, pretty lady."

Chapter End Notes

Thank all of you for coming on this Journey with me. I hope you have a little better image of Armitage Hux now than just the screaming red-head on the screen (wink!)

Unfortunately, Kez has crawled out of the wreckage of Serenno and asked for his own happily ever after. Which might mean I have to disturb Hux and his life. And we all like to see Hux when he's not in control of the situation, don't we? I hope in Episode IX they make him the bad guy. He so deserves it!

So keep an eye out for Kez Marab's story - 'Wanderer'. I'm finishing up a book I've been promising to my editor for months (yes, I am a writer in the real world too), but Wanderer is outlined, and I'm about to start putting pen to paper so to speak. Any special requests? I love comments!
Wanderer

I love this story. I took large parts of it and incorporated the characters into the newest book I've written. And, to honest, I don't know why I hadn't closed it sooner, but this isn't the end of Lyric and Armitage and Kez.

Their 'love' story continues in 'Wanderer', and I thank everyone who's read this story. It was the first thing I wrote after sustaining so many hard losses in the Real World, I didn't know if I'd ever write again. This forum, you people, helped pull me up when all I really wanted to to curl up into a ball and die.

Thanks for all the hits, and kudos. I know it's not a Reylo story, but at the time I needed to root for the underdog, the unsung characters and in doing so I found a voice I thought life had silenced.

I bow to you all.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!