Copper for the Charlatan

by DarlingOfDathomir

Summary

Even someone as stoically repressed as the General had a breaking point. At times of particularly intense bouts of stress, he would slip out to Canto Bight to visit the rooms of Baroness Orgida, an elite that provided a myriad of illegal services for the wealthy.

This time, though, he gets more than he wanted- but more than he could ever have hoped for.

A pile of sex, blood, death, and traitors... with the tiniest bit of fluff on top.

Pretty well split between Hux/OFC and Kylo/OFC interaction, but ultimately Hux-centric

One-shot that escalated

Notes
This is kind of graphic? I think? It gets kind of violent kind of fast, but people have different gauges for what the limit is. I'm not too sure how awful I am tbh.

Anyways, if the tags are something you're not into I'd click away.

This was intended to just be a one-shot smut, but I am pretty pleased with the plot, if you all wouldn't mind giving the rest a read <3

Things finally go Hux's way
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- Arrrr matey there be no Reylo ship in this particular harbor. There are 'reylo-ey' moments but it's not a thing.
-
Ride your Gift Horse

Chapter Summary

This chapter in itself is a one-shot, the rest of the fic is just based on it. Don't feel you have to go any further if you don't want to :P

Still seething, Hux couldn't even be bothered to scroll through his datapad during the flight. Instead, he was glaring at a spot on the floor, fingers twitching at the thought of what exactly he was going to do when he got planetside.

The Baroness was ecstatic to hear from him, afraid that he'd no longer had use for her... services. The amount he paid was a considerable sum, large enough that it was alluring even to someone as wealthy as her, so he was positive it was more about the credits than any sort of friendship. She was a shrewd woman, and he was sure that those people paid her to be there as well.

*How much does one pay to have the shit kicked out of you by the General of the First Order?*

Probably a lot.

She promised someone *very* special for him on this visit, and he wondered if she'd finally given in and captured a Resistance soldier for him. Out of the many flavors of depravity her block was known for, murder was the one thing she *didn’t* allow.

- *It couldn’t be... she found a force sensitive in this line of work?* A cold grin pricked the corners of his mouth as his mind raced through the many possibilities. *My visits are about to get so much more cathartic.*

“Well... this is an unexpected surprise.” he purred, strolling up to stand over the woman kneeling before him.

His heart pounded as the realization of what this meant sunk in. Excitement crackled through him; he ran his tongue over his teeth and bit his bottom lip, trying to decide how to make the most of the situation before him.

“Put that helmet back on and repeat what you did. We’ll go from there.” His voice snapped back to its usual authoritative tone as he came back to himself.

She twisted her hair up and returned the mask to her face, retreating to the darkness.

It was a cavernous space, split by a wide walkway illuminated with two large overhead lights, leaving the rest in shadow. Assorted equipment glinted in the darkened corners of the room; whether a threat of punishment or a promise of pleasure (usually both) was left up to the user. She made him wait so she could to take a moment to observe him, lightly prodding his thoughts. She saw the aftermath of Kylo Ren’s rage, felt fleeting stabs of emotion, the churning hate and disdain he had for...
everyone and every thing around him. Darkness swirled thick around the man, as if he had simply stepped forth from the shadowy ether- created by the night itself to walk this world in flesh.

*What a wicked creature.*

His heart was racing; malicious anticipation burning like an inferno. Hux pulled his gloves tight, leather creaking as he clenched his right hand in a fist. She smiled in the shadows- *I think I’m going to enjoy this.*

Noting his thrill with her force wielding abilities, she chose to be more dramatic than her prior entrance. She hovered a few feet in the air, floating into the spotlight. With both hands raised, she aggressively snatched the General up by his throat and lifted him a foot in the air until she heard a fearful struggle for breath. She released him and immediately after she dropped herself to the floor, taking a knee with her head lowered.

“My apologies General Hux,” the vocoded voice entreated “I didn’t know it was you.”

He was already beyond enraged with Kylo Ren when he left for Canto Bight, and the all too-familiar feeling of a force choke stoked the embers in his chest.

“Stand.” he snarled through clenched teeth.

She stood at attention to face him, cheeks flushed from his impromptu choking and the absolute fury it raised in him.

“Remove that ridiculous mask.”

She pushed two buttons on each side and there was a mechanical hiss as the visor slid up. Long black hair spilled out and golden eyes stared back with a hint of amusement.

His lip curled as he looked at it disdainfully before taking it from her hands and tossing it carelessly to the floor with a clank.

Ice blue irises were a crystalline frame to blown pupils, staring into her with a hate colder than Hoth winters. A crack rang out when leather connected with skin as he backhanded her across her face.

“Look at me!” he ordered. She turned, recovering to stand upright. He smirked, pleased with himself, as his gaze followed a rivulet of blood budding on her split lip. How he longed for Kylo to look up at him like that. His hand cupped her face and slowly wiped the crimson away with his gloved thumb, leaving a smudge on her chin. His grip slid down the side of her face to her throat, and she could hear the crinkle of the leather as he quickly tightened his grip.

“You.” his words were breathy and low as his left hand tucked a lock of hair out of her face before drifting lazily down. His grip lingered on the curves of her body to rest on her hip, suddenly pulling her into him forcefully. His voice, thick with contempt, lowered to a sinister hiss as he leant down, lips just brushing her ear to send a shiver through her.

“Force sensitives prowl about like rabid animals, believing they are our superiors… But look at you.” He shoved her backwards into the darkness and she fell to the floor, arms spread to catch the fall. He stalked to her left side and pressed his heel to her sternum pinning her back to the ground. The polished tip of his boot held her chin in place, eyes narrowing as she stared up at the General towering above her. He ground his heel slightly to move her face to the side, staring down his nose.
as if he were observing a curiosity.

“At the mercy of my every whim,” he said half to himself in amazement. “Who do you answer to, beast?”

“You.”

“Excuse me?” he pressed down harder with the heel of his boot, pitch raising towards the end of a demand disguised as a question.

Her response sounded pained from the pressure as she forced the words out, “To you, General Hux, sir.”

She could see the ghost of a smile in the corner of her eye, though his face was in the shadows. The spotlight made everything a sharp contrast of light and dark, his copper hair seeming to glow in the light. He motioned to the corner in which he had pointed her face.

“Bring me the crop. Your disrespectful actions come with repercussions.” He was struggling to keep his boot on her chest as the fabric of his pants pulled tight across his arousal. Never had he expected to have the opportunity to release himself on a force user at least a fraction of the way he had suffered at their hand. Of course, he frequently daydreamed about the various ways he would take his revenge on Kylo Ren, but he told himself it was just dreaming at best. To have this power literally underneath his heel was another plane completely. He felt high on the moment.

She reached out and a red and black riding crop appeared to hover beside him. He removed the boot from her chest and placed his foot on the other side, standing over her. He delicately took it from the air and lowered it to brush the leather keeper across her lips.

“You will be reminded of the hierarchy, beast. Open” she parted her lips and he pushed the leather between her teeth “Mine” the word was barely audible, whispered in awe. He stepped to her right side and lightly flicked her in the face with the crop “Stand.” She slowly rose to her feet to stare up at him, jaw clenched.

He snatched at her throat again “I didn’t tell you to close your mouth.” he growled. She parted her blood-streaked lips and he centered the cold metal rod of the riding crop between them, pushing her chin up sharply with his index finger “Hold this.”

Hux stepped back, raising an eyebrow as he cocked his head, observing the force user under his command. He removed the plain black coat draped around his shoulders to reveal a tightly fitting black button up, quite dressed down from his usual attire on board the Finalizer. He rolled up his sleeves, staring at her with cold eyes. She could feel the lust for brutality coming off him in waves.

"The second most dangerous man in the galaxy," Orgida had warned her.

The General walked around her in a slow circle, words acidic and biting; “I can’t throw you across a room. I can’t choke half the life out of you from a distance...” from behind he put an arm around her waist and let his other hand run over her, squeezing her breast roughly before stopping again at her neck, already slightly discolored from his attention. He leant down, letting his lips graze her neck, before nipping at the soft skin.

“But I can take my hands, and make you feel what I feel, you rabid beast.” he pulled her tight against him and squeezed again, hanging on the sound of every gasping breath she struggled to pull. She
could feel his erection at her lower back and ground against him as she squirmed against his grip.

He shuddered and squeezed harder “Disgusting.”

She smirked against the cold rod between her teeth, enjoying every bit of this dynamic. She then blatantly rolled her hips, bucking backward into him, evoking a sharp, ragged exhale from Hux.

“Vile” the word was barely coherent, more air than vocalization.

He snatched the crop from her mouth and shoved her to the floor, landing on her hands and knees. He accentuated every word with a stroke of the crop against her tight leather pants as she kneeled before him, more to remind himself than anything else. “You! Will! Not! Act! Without! Orders!” He ran his hand through his hair to replace a lock that had fallen in his face with the exertion.

He stalked to the front of her and lifted her chin with the tip of his boot. “Do you understand me?”

“Yes” her voice held onto the “s” with a lingering hiss.

He gently stroked the crop along her cheek, letting it fall across her lips before pulling it behind his back “Apparently you do not. Yes, what?”

“Yes, General Hux, sir”

“So slow to learn. Your ignorance will come at a cost. Stand.” She rose, glaring at him with a thinly disguised sneer on her face.

Hux noticed this and was wondering if he was pushing her to a breaking point. Regardless of the control given to him in these walls, she was still a force user and could lash out at any time. He spun the crop beside him absentmindedly, momentarily distracted.

Mmm. Distracted so loudly

He felt a slight pressure around his neck and he froze “I might what, General?”

Shit, she can read my thoughts.

She lunged towards him and he lashed out reflexively, coming hard across her face with the crop; the pressure disappeared.

She stood suspended in place, keeping her face to the side after he struck

“I will control you since you cannot control yourself!” he shouted, half to the woman in front of him and half as reassurance to himself. The things he wanted to do to her were farther than he ever allowed, and his hands trembled as he took a deep breath, reminding himself to maintain control.

She spat blood on the floor before replying “Yes, General Hux, sir.”

“Look at me”. She slowly raised her head to lock eyes with him- her eyes were almost unnaturally golden. Blood mingled with saliva as it dripped down her chin, one corner of her mouth twitched upwards in amusement.

He rarely touched those he came to see, and absolutely didn’t allow them to touch him, but he felt
drunk on the power and control he had over her— a force choke never ended with him as the victor; this was a new experience, and it was absolutely exhilarating. Acting without thinking, he grabbed her face and kissed her forcefully, savoring the bitter iron of blood that was sharp across his tongue. She pulled him into her and put one hand up to the side of his face, returning his advances. The metallic taste gushed forth as he bit down her lip, and she yelped into his mouth at the sudden pain. It was distracting enough to pull him from the haze and actually think about what he was doing. Hux shoved her away and took a couple of steps back, frantically wiping her blood from his face. He took a deep breath, trying to regain composure.

Hux glared at her, eyes riveted on him with a hint of smugness on her face. “I didn’t give you permission to touch me, beast. Remove your corset.” he gestured with the crop, voice shakier and less contrived than before. Without breaking eye contact, she held her arms out to the side, palms focused in on herself, and used the force to slowly unbuckle her rancor skin corset one buckle at a time. She let it fall and unzipped the front of her under armor top; with a shrug it too fell to the floor behind her.

She was wearing a black leather studded bra, with fine silver chains crossed over her chest. He held the crop behind him at his lower back, as if appraising a recruit.

He chalked it up to more force manipulation, the way she got him to act so inappropriately. Realizing his right hand was trembling slightly he clenched it around the braided handle of the crop, making a point to drag the fingers of his left hand across her exposed flesh, digging in to every divot “Surprisingly scarred for someone in this industry” he mused aloud “But I suppose as force users are barbarians— it should be of no surprise to me.”

“Would you like for me to show you how barbaric I can be, Hux?”

He kicked the back of her legs, making her fall to her knees. He carded his fingers through her silken hair before grabbing it tightly, snatching her back to look up at him.

“How do you think threats are going to fare for you in this state, beast?” She bared her teeth and snarled at him before he released her, stalking to a darkened corner. Motion activated lights snapped on at his presence, illuminating a rack in a low red glow. “Heel.” he ordered.

The bloodied force user rose and sidled up slowly to his call, eyes tracing over the many restraints on the metal frame. He reached to tap the crop against two metal cuffs at the far corners, smiling carnivorously at the look of apprehension on her face.

“Turn so you are facing away from me, and place your wrists there” he commanded, accentuating it with a slap across her backside. When she obliged, he tightened the buckles down and pulled on her arms to ensure they wouldn’t slide loose. With this freedom, he let his lips trail across a particularly dark scar across her back as he brushed her hair over her shoulders. She was stretched to the limit of her height, heels lifted to accommodate his commands.

Already more involved than he cared to be, part of him lectured himself internally on self-control. The heat of the moment forward smothered it, though, allowing him to continue this indulgence. He breathed in deeply; the smell of incense and sweat mingled with the now very familiar metallic tang of blood; it wasn’t entirely unpleasurable. She shifted her hips into him again and he muttered a curse under his breath. He pressed into her to whisper into her ear.

“You insist… on being… difficult…” Hux reached between their friction to undo his belt, allowing himself to run his hand across his bulge, groaning softly as he felt wetness soaking through the
fabric. He took half a step backward, drawing a tremulous breath as he felt his control slipping away.

“It is unfortunate that you creatures only respond to violence.” He relished her caught form as he folded his thick belt in half, pulling it taut with a crack. He tried to center on the sound in an attempt to ground himself.

“To whom do you belong?” He finally pulled a cry from her lips as the belt came down across her back.

“Ah! You, General Hux, Sir.”

“To whom will you submit?”

The belt came down again and cry was more guttural as she snarled in reply “You, General Hux, sir!” every word of that response had a breath between it; the last word was enunciated as if she were in a military line up.

The sharp curses with which he berated himself were becoming less and less effective.

“I will punish you as I see fit, is that correct?” He changed directions and struck upward with the belt in a powerful backhand stroke.

“Shit!” her voice almost broke the scene, but he savored the venom, “Yes... General Hux... Sir...” she panted between words. He saw her head bow, turned to the side to make the slightest of eye contact. She knew she was giving in, she had to, and that made this all the more decadent.

He deemed the people he visited here beneath him- tools to relieve stress and pressure from his work life, primarily the constant assaults from Kylo Ren. He never 'lowered' himself to have sex with them- such a thing was for the undisciplined, he told himself. But to take something so denied and powerful was irresistible. He began to feel his rigid rules come undone as he threw the belt to the ground and closed the distance between them, running kisses across the darkening welts on her back, savoring the blossoming marks of his hand. He trusted the Mistress would only put him with someone clean, She makes far too much off me to risk that, he told himself. Hux grabbed her hips and pushed into her lower back, and she returned with a slow swivel against him.

She couldn't stop watching him, and he made a point to hold that peripheral eye contact- the glowering golden grimace shot through his heart like a blaster bolt. He moaned and slid his hand down her side, over her hip bones, to the elaborate buckle on her pants, all the while holding her gaze... till her eyes closed under the strokes of his fingers rubbing over the leather seaming of her pants.

I can't, I'm better than this, he kept repeating to himself, but the back of his mind told him he deserved this, earned it, and this was the least of retributions he could seize.

He drank in every detail- every drop of sweat, every vocalization he felt under his glove around her throat. He wanted to close his eyes, not wanting to see himself like... like this, but he couldn't stop. The only thing that truly intoxicated him was power, and this was power incarnate. Every sense of resolve he had was shot to bits at the heat of his hate- it was sinfully gratifying, taking her.

A beast of the Force, he said, trying to simultaneously discount her and justify his actions. She had the force at her command, but she was at his command, and if he had to throw everything to the wind, he at least deserved to experience this.
His internal discourse distracted him and it seemed his body was acting on its own. He found himself leaning into her, pushing her wrists into the binders and mostly supporting his weight. He snapped back to at his name on her lips.

"Hux..." Her voice calling out to him made this more real than he wanted- Hux didn’t want to be reminded of what he was doing, the time for internal judgement was later.

He removed one of his gloves, reached over her head, and pulled it taut between her teeth.

“Bite down. I will not be distracted by your yowling” his voice was sharp but tinted with desperation in her ear. His bare hand returned to her belt line and she pushed back into him again. A small cry escaped her lips as he hastily unbuckled her belt and slipped his hand down. Soft fingers dipped into her and he gasped at the surprising wetness- much to his surprise she was clearly enjoying herself- the realization almost made him dizzy. She bit down hard on the glove as he leant on her back, fervently rubbing small circles and hanging on every moan it elicited from her, each one rising in pitch as her breathing quickened.

“Helpless, under the hands of your General, aren’t you, beast” His voice was ragged as his one gloved hand reached up to her throat and squeezed. The air was buzzing around him as she cried out against the glove between her teeth, bucking forward into his hand. He quickly pulled away and he could feel a small, needy whine escape her throat.

“No no, not yet.” he yanked her pants down over her hips and tore the delicate lace undergarments away.

He pulled her hips back, You can stop right now, you’re better than this.

Alarms were going off in the back of his mind, but they were drowned by his heartbeat thudding in his ears as his hands moved to free himself. He brushed his tip against her warmth and in one swift motion he was inside her, all caution temporarily forgotten. He grunted like he’d been hit in the gut, she felt so good and it had been years since he’d been with someone. He'd almost forgotten what it was like.

She cried out at the sudden fullness, and he made a point to steel himself against his reaction to the sound, slowly pulling out and grinding his teeth as he sucked in a breath before angrily thrusting into her

If there was ever a definition of hatefucking, this is it, he thought as he aggressively took her, huffing with the force of his exertion. He still had his hand tight around her throat, the other holding her hip for better leverage.

Denied just seconds earlier, it didn’t take long for her to work back up to orgasm. His words were more growl than voice as he taunted her.

“That’s right beast, you will come for your General”

A guttural groan pulled from the very center of her chest fought against the glove as she came. He was rough through her high- overloading her senses as she whimpered against the soft leather between her teeth. He could feel her tighten around him and pushed into her at a cruel pace, the chains above clanking every time he shoved back into her. The glove fell from her mouth, and he couldn't hold back at the sound of her crying out his name. He tightened his grip and crushed her to
him, burying his face in the soft flesh between her neck and shoulder as he spilled into her, cursing all the while.

"You, ah, you absolute, ah, bitch, fuck, I, I, augh..."

They both stayed together, panting, each in their own little world as they came down. He was only allowed a few seconds of a post-orgasm high before the dread crept in. Her blood was in my mouth... we didn’t use any protection. Ever paranoid, he half wondered if this was a trap. He pulled out of her and tucked himself back in his pants, grimacing at the sensitivity and the slickness. Disgusted with himself, he wanted desperately to go back to his superior state of being, desiring a shower and change immediately.

Hux snapped out of his haze of self-degradation as he heard a metallic clink of the cuffs unclasping above- of course a force user could. She lowered her hands, pulled her pants back over her hips, and turned around to the surprised General, smiling at his desperate scrambling to fix his clothing. She summoned the discarded glove from the ground and handed it to him.

“I have had a lovely time with you, Armitage. Oh, and don’t beat yourself up too much- I’m not a “regular” employee of Orgida, if that makes it any better for you.”

His heart dropped to his stomach at the mention of his first name, believing his fears of something more at work to be confirmed. Now he just had to discern if this was some bizarre assassination or blackmail attempt.

“Mistress Orgida is my cousin, and she told me you were in need of protection. I’m a mercenary, and she bought me for a month to see if my… services... are what you need. I urge you to think it over while I change into something more comfortable and retrieve my contract. It would be rude to turn down such an expensive gift from such a kind friend. I’m not cheap.” she winked. He said nothing, eyes following her as she sauntered over to her clothing abandoned on the floor.

She whistled as she disappeared into the darkness, and after a few seconds, Orgida entered the room; long, ornate robes making it appear as if she was floating. He hurriedly salvaged what he could of his appearance, brushing his hair back into place the best he could and scrubbing his bloodied mouth on his sleeve, desperate to regain some form of composure.

“Isn’t Ichara just wonderful?” she bubbled “After I heard about that rogue force girl powerful enough to kill Snoke, I was positively beside myself fretting over your well-being, General Hux. I am aware your new leader is strong with the force and somewhat… hard to deal with… as well.”

It took a moment to find his voice, trying to find a center in the chaotic array of emotions drowning him. “Ah.. yes” he stuttered. “Yes, ah, he is, ah, rather unpleasant.” So much had happened so fast and he felt like he was adrift in an ion storm, helpless.

“She’s been a sought after mercenary that was employed on Bakura for many years, but she returned when I asked for her. I hope you found her interview impressive. I often use her presence as a threat for those that disappoint me.” she laughed, but the mirth didn't reach her eyes.

Was that a veiled threat?

The police force was already deep in her pocket, and he was sure she had greater ambitions than running a block in Canto Bight. Though concerned about what was going on, he felt slight relief at her seeming lack of understanding as to what exactly went on behind the closed doors just moments
The mercenary re-entered the room and he swallowed nervously. She wore a flowing black skirt with a high split on each side and a tight fitting tunic, embroidered in ornate Gatalentan designs with the same three buckle leather corset from earlier. A black and silver light saber bounced on her hip as her boot heels clipped on the ground to accentuate every step towards the pair.

She flipped her arm out to the side as she stepped into a deep bow. “General Armitage Hux, I am beyond honored to be working for one of the most dangerous men in the galaxy.”

Forever susceptible to compliments, he managed a tight-lipped smile, but his cheeks still flushed at the sight of her. Hux desperately tried to find a foothold in this strange situation.

The Mistress Orgida tsk’d at her much younger cousin and limply waved her heavily ringed hand at her. “Your face, dear”

Ichara winked at Hux before closing her eyes and holding her hands over her face; the cut healed and blossoming bruises dissipated. “Thank you, I forgot. Terribly rude of me.” she looked over to Hux’s surprised face “With my line of work, I’ve gotten fairly competent at force-healing.”

“I, ahem,” Hux cleared his throat awkwardly “Ah, it has come to my attention that you are a skilled mercenary and Orgida believes I may be in need of your protections. I spend most of the time in my office, I hope that isn’t too bland for you. She was telling me of your time on Bakura, perhaps a different arrangement would be more exciting for you.”

“I beg to differ, General, It would be quite an exciting position to protect someone as important as yourself. Besides” she cocked an eyebrow “Kylo Ren might think twice with my presence on board.”

The General visibly flinched at the mention of his name. “Our Supreme Leader, is, ah, he is a man with a volatile temper but I am grateful to serve him” He stuttered through the rehearsed lines.

“How strange. I’ve heard he’s an absolute cunt.”

Hux noticeably blanched at such a blunt statement.

“Ichara, you’re not on Bakura anymore. Have some respect.” Orgida’s voice dropped some it's overly saccharine overtones as she corrected her much younger cousin.

She huffed and unhooked a small holopad from her belt. “Here is my contract, General. My loving, knowledgeable cousin, has purchased a month of my services at her expense.”

He couldn’t help but feel “knowledgeable” was a slight threat, insinuating that he had to accept her services considering everything she knew... everything he had done.

The “contract” was only three sentences long.

“Ichara Orgida is to serve General Hux of the First Order as he sees fit. Only in extreme circumstances, at her discretion, would disobedience be an option. All services and extraneous charges will be covered by Baroness Ruxinn Orgida for the first thirty days.”
Something inside him screamed to run, that this was a horrible idea, but the thought of Ren’s impotent rage at Hux having a force user at his beck and call was just enough to push him over. He took the stylus and signed with a flourish.

“I have an elite guard specifically for my protection, but you will accompany me everywhere that I feel necessary, understood?”

She nodded her head, “Yes, General Hux, sir” Her eyes gleamed as she looked back up at him, watching him blink rapidly at the phrasing. She didn’t even bother hiding the smirk that lit up her face.

“Ah, Send for your things, and-”

Mistress Orgida held up a hand to cut him off “Oh, I had that done while you interviewed her.” she smiled “Not to be presumptuous, General, but I knew it was an offer you couldn’t refuse.”

Interviewed.

Couldn’t refuse.

Again, he felt ominous undertones to her words, but brushed them away to keep up appearances.

“Well, Mistress,” He smiled and bowed his head as he took her hand “As always it has been a pleasure. I suppose I will be taking my new hire back to the Finalizer to get her settled in.”

“Always a pleasure, General Hux. Please keep me updated with her progress”

Ichara reached out and her mask flew from the floor to her hand. With a quick twist up of her hair she disappeared behind the visor, a faceless force user again. A black cloak flew out of the darkness and she slipped it on, flipping up the hood. She held back as they were leaving to hug her cousin.

“I want us to be hit as soon as we get on the roof. Take his men by surprise” she whispered.

“Of course, dear cousin” Orgida gushed, “I will miss you too, but we will be closer than ever now that you are back in civilized space.”

"I'm sure we will," Ichara smiled before lowering her visor, running to catch up with the General.
Penny in the Bank

His new hire proves her usefulness... to an extent.
Phasma is grumpy, Kylo makes a point, and Hux just needs everyone to give him a kriiffing minute.

Given the sensitive nature of her operation and the high level clients she entertained, secrecy was of utmost importance. The dimly lit hallways had many twists and turns before finally coming out at one of the multiple secret entrances she had scattered through her block. The Baroness owned everything on the strip, and the hallways were skillfully run through multiple legitimate businesses. Phasma and two others waited for him at the entrance. She stepped forward to stop the figure trailing behind him.

“Sir. Who is this?”

“Phasma, this is Ichara. She works for the First Order now... apparently.” As soon as the words left his mouth a ship flew dangerously close overhead, dropping off five shabbily dressed men with a thud.

“We need him!” one shouted, pointing at the General. In his hurry to leave, he’d forgotten the black hooded overcoat he wore to obscure his identity; his trademark copper hair could be seen a mile away.

Phasma whipped out her blaster and easily struck one down. Ichara’s red saber lit up the platform, whirling in the air as she ran over to them, striking low and fast, cutting two down at the knee and coming back up to decapitate them. She deflected a poorly aimed blaster bolt back into one of Hux’s men as the other was taken down by one of the two remaining kidnappers.

Phasma shot one between the eyes, pausing to shoot the other when Ichara yelled “Wait!” voice crackling through the vocoder.

“Who sent you?”

“The-- the Resistance,” The last man grabbed at his throat, struggling to stutter his reply through a closing windpipe.

“How did they know we were here?”

“I don’t know, I-augh!” she dropped him to the ground. Hux could tell by her silhouette against the bright lights of the city below that she was doing the same terrifying mind probing he’d endured at the hands of Kylo Ren.

The man’s breath gurgled in his throat as she stabbed into his consciousness.

“Hmm. No I do agree with you there, that was quite an oversight.” She held him in the air again; her saber sputtering as it cauterized blood and flesh, slowly removing both legs just above the knee. The
man screamed, and she squeezed harder to stifle the sound. The greasy smell of burning flesh was thick in the air and Hux thought he might vomit.

“You tell your Resistance friends that the droid maker downstairs will have nothing for them, and you let everyone know, that the bitch of Bakura’s fangs bite for the First Order now.” She flung him over the edge of the building and onto a trash pile below.

She turned to the General and bowed her head “I hope I have served you well, Sir.”

“We need to leave” was all he could manage to say, face distorted in disgust as he and marched up the ramp with Phasma dragging the two fallen troopers by an arm. Ichara followed close behind.

“Use a less obvious First Order ship next time, General. Canto Bight is a playground for those both wishing and not wishing to be seen. They were just run of the mill black mailers, but when they saw you land they contacted the Resistance. Even they know better than to try anything serious on Canto Bight, though.”

Cantonica made a point to be a neutral territory; both the First Order and the Resistance had too many resources there to jeopardize their good standing. An attack from one or the other could get the aggressor banned from Canto Bight. Both sides bought most of their military equipment from suppliers who spent their time in the luxurious city, and to lose that safe zone would be too big a detriment to gamble with.

The return trip to the ship was made in awkward silence. With Phasma at the controls and the other 2 guards unconscious, the General sat quietly across from Ichara, randomly glancing over at her. He was uncomfortable that he couldn’t follow her eyes behind the smoked visor glass. Knowing her force sensitivity, he also found himself trying to think of nothingness. Flashes of blood, the belt, the way his face felt against her skin, all flashed through his mind despite his best efforts to keep them down.

She sighed, set the holopad on the seat beside her, and reached up to take off her helmet, setting it on the floor.

“General Hux. Can you please try not to think of nothing so loudly? It’s all I can hear. I will not pick through your thoughts unless you ask me to.”

"Why the hell would anyone want that?"

“I signed that contract- I’m here to serve you. You need to trust me or this is all going to be very difficult.”

“Forgive my trepidation, I’ve had naught but negative experiences with you lot, and I hadn’t expected to be saddled with... this.” his voice came out a lot harsher than he’d expected.

“I know. I’m sorry.” The genuine softness in her voice threw him off.

She picked up her holopad and went back to typing.

“I’m informing Mistress Orgida of the rooftop incident. It’s the responsibility of business owners on her strip to adhere to strict security guidelines. They will be punished for such laxity in the attention they pay to their surroundings. There is no reason those spying scum should not have been quickly noted. Their laziness will not come without severe consequences.”
He liked the venom in her voice. *Maybe this won’t be so bad after all* he mused. After all, she was here to serve him, and she had proven herself to be decent at what she does.

*In many ways.*

He stuffed the thought down as soon as it arose. There couldn’t be any more of… *that* type of behavior now that this was a working relationship. Hell, there was still the chance that Kylo Ren might strike her down on sight. Aside from his infatuation with that scavenger, who knows how he would react to her. Her eyes flashed up at him for a second at the thought, and as he caught her gaze she quickly looked back down to what she was doing.

Part of him felt certain that she was the mechanism in some elaborate trap.

Only time would tell, but he had time—and he was good at waiting.

---

Kylo sat bolt upright in bed. He leapt up looked around frantically, expecting to see Rey somewhere in his quarters. No—this force swell was across the ship and had the distinct dragging of darkness calling. For a split second he was terrified that somehow Snoke had come back from the dead, but his signature in the force was much darker and more distinct than whatever this was.

He dressed quickly, taking a moment to run a brush through his hair and mist it with some ridiculous oil Mitaka had suggested. Kylo had choked the man after overhearing he thought his hair looked “comically unruly”, but had to admit it did make quite a difference in his appearance. Instead of thanking him, Kylo assumed that taking his advice through a more polished appearance should be compliment enough. After hastily getting dressed, he flew down the hallway.

He was concerned that if Hux had something to do with this he might not like what was waiting for him. The General rushed to Canto Bight after a particularly heated meeting earlier that ended in him being thrown against the wall and Kylo Ren storming out of the room. There were all manner of wild accusations about what he did there; only ever taking Phasma and a small handful of loyal soldiers. The darkness grew as he neared the hangar, and did so the mixture of dread mingled with excitement welling in his chest.

The doors were closed with an out-of-commission code due to “Hazardous Conditions”, requiring… of course… only Hux’s override code. Proof again that whatever it was the General did on that planet was something he wanted left unknown. Kylo reached out and forced the blast doors open, sparks flying as he strode through, only serving to make his presence that more striking.

“General, I thought this hangar was out of commission,” he called out sarcastically as he crossed the threshold with long strides “It seems to be in working order.” He saw a robed figure in a mask to his left, and could feel the force swirling around them. His heart was pounding with the thrill of meeting another, and was determined to make a severe first impression—in part from ego, and in part to ensure it was known he was the one in charge. He pulled out his saber and ignited it as he approached.

*This is it. It’s him.*

Her heart leapt in her throat as she stepped in front of the general, stepping into a wide L stance. She drew her saber, holding it horizontally in front of her.

“Lower your weapon” she ordered across the hangar.
Kylo broke into a run, and she launched forward, running to meet him.

Hux stopped, rooted to the spot, and watched everything unfold like if it was in slow motion.

Sparks flew as their blades collided; he swung high and the force of his blow pushed her underneath him, staring with wild eyes across the crackling blades. They parried for what felt like forever, both grunting and snarling at each other as blades danced across the hangar. She flicked the point of her blade low and leapt up to the side. All of his downward force was directed at the floor with the sudden change and he stumbled, almost falling. He barely caught himself and roared as he spun around, swinging wide.

To his surprise she was directly behind him, saber holstered. She jumped on his back and hooked an arm around his neck, tightening like a vise.

“Told you to stop” the vocoded voice crackled into his ear. He cursed, stumbling from her sudden weight. He then pushed himself backward, falling on top of her with all his weight. His saber cut off and clattered across the hangar floor as they both hit the ground with a thud. It worked, though- he knocked the air out of her. He leapt up and spun around, summoning her lightsaber from her belt and igniting it. She tried to crawl backwards but collapsed, wheezing, and held her hand out in surrender.

*Stars you are a heavy fucker.* She whispered into his mind.

“You will tell me your purpose here, or I will take it from you.” He loomed over her, taking another step forward to prove his sincerity.

She glared through the mask, angry that she was prostrated at the point of her own blade.

*That’s enough, Ren!* Hux shouted in an exasperated tone, as if reprimanding a child. Kylo’s attention snapped back to the General. “She works for the First Order now.” He furrowed his brow and walked over to the General, ignoring his quarry.

“I hired her on Canto Bight. I could have told you this had you not burst through the doors like a feral animal. Ichara, come here.” the General motioned for her and she ran over in time to slip between him and the towering man. He stepped forward until she had to crane her neck up to look at him.

“Remove your mask”

She stared at him, unmoving, chest heaving.

“Remove it. This is the Supreme Leader of the First Order.” the General repeated behind her. Kylo’s eyes flicked up at the General, irritated, before back down to the woman in front of him. Hux enjoyed the pause, making a point that she responded to him instead of Kylo.

She removed it with a hiss and looked up into the dark, angry eyes staring down at her, an icy stab of fear creeping up into her chest.

“I’m a mercenary, Ichara Orgida, recently returned from a stint on Bakura. Baroness Orgida, my cousin, wishes for me to serve at the hand of General Hux. It is an honor to meet you, Kylo Ren.”
The words came out in short bursts as she panted to catch her breath.

His eyes searched hers “Why have I been unable to feel you across the force till now?”

“I abhor politics, and I didn’t want to be found… but I’m here now, and I pledge my loyalty to the First Order. That's all that matters.”

His voice was pointedly condescending “I should kill you for your blatant insubordination, but it was out of ignorance. You will not be afforded this luxury should you strike out at me again.” His eyes locked with the General’s as he finished his sentence, implying that it was a warning to both of them.

_He knows exactly why she’s here._

His attention turned back to Ichara and he stared into her, cupping her face with a gloved hand, gently poking into her mind. She gave little resistance this time. He got a glimpse of the General’s silhouette staring down at her, which quickly flipped to watching him sign the contract, striking down the attackers on the rooftop- he went deeper and felt a sharp pain as he saw a night sky illuminated by raging flames.

_Graceless_ She made a point to think loudly, and jerked her head back.

“Interesting.” He shoved her saber towards her and she snatched it from him, holding it by her side instead of holstering it. “General Hux will bring you to my training area at 0900 hours. You are clearly not a threat, but I want to be aware of your abilities.” She scowled at him, but said nothing.

He turned, cape flowing behind him as he left the hangar. The three stayed still until the door closed.

“I stand by my earlier statement regarding him.” she muttered.

Hux grabbed her arm and yanked her around. “Don't be an idiot- he could have killed you. You'll be no good to me dead.”

“Only because I wasn’t trying to kill him” she retorted “I knew exactly who he was. No normal person would dress that dramatically.”

He cocked an eyebrow and made a point to look her up and down. "Is that so?"

She narrowed her eyes at him and huffed.

Phasma was exhausted and over the stress of the evening. “Sir, I will get her set up in temporary quarters before we find something more permanent... should we find it necessary.” She had enough to worry about with Kylo Ren, and was irritated at the prospect of another force user slashing the ship up with impunity. If there was an attempt at hiding her distaste for the situation, it was a poor one.

“Those are halfway across the ship, should I actually need her it’d take ages to get to me. There are vacant quarters on my level. Choose whichever you deem fit- at the moment I have more important things to tend to.” Hux walked away as quickly as he could without running. His head was spinning- none of this had sunk in yet, and he just wanted to be alone... in a shower as hot as he could stand.

Phasma marched down the hallway with Ichara struggling to match the pace of the much taller woman.
“So, you are the General’s right hand?”

“I am a Captain.”

“You don’t like Kylo Ren much either I take it”

She stopped and spun around abruptly, Ichara almost running face first into her gleaming chest plate.

“There is no like or dislike. My life and my loyalty belongs to the First Order.” Irritated, she turned and marched even quicker down the hallway.

Ichara probed gently at her mind to see what she could find. Just flashes of exasperation, anger, and concern.

“You chambers are here. You will be given clearance codes for select levels in the morning. Do not leave or you will be locked out. Troopers will be here with your belongings momentarily.”

Before she could ask any other questions Phasma sharply turned on her heel and marched back to the lift. The General was her friend, but she swore she was going to have some choice words with him in the morning.
After a tumultuous night of attempted sleep Hux gave up on rest, deciding to get an early start on his day. After the incident in the hangar, he wanted to ensure Ichara didn’t do anything to endanger *either* of them during the meeting with their emotionally unstable leader and decided to speak with her before she went to him.

As he was scrolling through his itinerary for the day, the bluish light of his holopad caught divots across the usually smooth surface of his gloves. He realized they were from… teeth. He could feel the blood rush to his groin as he ran his thumb over the half moon of indentations reflecting on the top of his closed fist.

*No. No no no. That’s enough.*

He snatched up his thermos of tea off his coffee table and polished off most of the burning liquid, hoping the pain of the heat and the bitterness of the leaves would bring him back from distraction.

“God, man, get it together,” he said aloud to himself, mentally going over the checklist of all the horrible things that could happen to him should this meeting go poorly.

She was already awake, seated in the middle of the common area of her quarters meditating when Hux entered unannounced at 0800. There was no pretense of pleasantries.

“Good, you are awake. We have very little time to prepare you for your meeting with Kylo Ren. I don’t know what he expects of you, but if you wish to be alive and of any use to me we will *not* have a repeat of last night.”

She was dressed in her black mercenary gear with low-profile armor plating; a dark blue velvet robe draped over it all, saber in front of her on the floor.

“I am aware of that, General” she replied, without opening her eyes. “I’ll be docile and appease his ego. Once he finds me of no interest he’ll move on”—she laughed softly “I’m not concerned about it, and neither should you be.”

It was a lie. She had more riding on this meeting than Hux was aware of, and a fear she had long kept stowed away crept through her veins. There was a panic fluttering in her chest, and it was all
she could do to keep it at bay.

What if I overplayed my hand in the hangar?
What if I gave away too much?

Part of the joy of mercenary work was that it was generally fairly clear cut, and the majority of people she dealt with were either too stupid or too inept to be decent at elaborate schemes and ruses. This was a different, much more dangerous playing field- and it wasn’t just her life in the balance. She was responsible to Orgida for the General’s as well, but it was a responsibility that extended past the parameters of a mere contract.

There was something vicious and frigid in him that fascinated her, and against all intentions, there was a flicker of personal interest growing. She couldn’t risk losing someone so... intriguing.

“Is that so?” His polished boots stopped a foot in front of her. He pictured the leather keeper of his crop lifting her chin to look at him and the image lit a fire in his stomach. He clenched his jaw as he pushed it back, reiterating that control was paramount now. At her lack of response Hux huffed and extended a gloved hand to assist her to her feet. “Enough. Stand.”

As soon as she stood up he lunged forward threateningly; leather clad fingers again pressed against her neck. “Your flippant attitude may well be the death of you, and I could care less- but I refuse to lose all I have built because of your insolent behavior.”

He was close enough she could smell tea and mint on his breath; for a second she almost closed the gap and kissed him… but no, this wasn’t the time for that.

Stop. Focus.

She remained stoic in the face of his aggression “General Hux, sir. If you cannot control your emotions perhaps it is best you don’t accompany me. You’re more afraid Kylo will view my hire as a threatening move by you rather than have any actual concerns about my presence.” at this his hand shot down and he stepped away. She was right.

“I can feel the anxiety pouring off you in waves.” She reached out to run the back of her index finger softly down the side of his face “Don’t worry, General Hux, we will be fine.” there was an air of smugness to the last sentence. He couldn’t shake their interaction on Canto Bight from his mind, and the thought of Kylo Ren being privy to his most secret and deplorable moments made him sick to his stomach.

Ichara brushed past him, grabbing her mask from the side table. “I’ll have the guards outside escort me and bring me to you when it’s done. I'm not familiar with the layout of the ship.”

And just like that he was left alone, heart pounding in her quarters. His mind was scrambling to bring order to his thoughts till his eyes fell on the holopad she’d left behind on the side table. Everything stilled, and he centered himself on what he did best- strategy & tactics.

During his sleepless night he mulled over the best ways to regain control over the situation he found himself stuck in. One thing he was sure of was that he wanted access to her communications. He fumbled around in the pocket of his greatcoat for the miniature computer spike he’d procured specifically for that purpose. In seconds, a program to route any sent or received messages through his private holopad had been installed. He sighed in relief at the beep of confirmation and carefully set it back on the corner of the side table.
Hux wandered around the room to look for anything else of interest. He told himself he wouldn’t get the opportunity again, as he wasn’t ever coming back here for any reason. At all. Especially not… that… though he couldn’t help but imagine her spread across the black bedding for him, wrists bound above her.

He shook his head, disgusted with himself. Afraid of where his mind may go if he spent any more time lingering, he quickly left for his office.

*Perhaps they’ll kill each other and I’ll be free of two thorns in my side* he mused, though part of him knew he didn’t want to lose her. At least, not yet.

-  

Kylo Ren was already in the training room, swinging his saber and lazily slicing bits off a training droid as she entered. He paused in acknowledgement before slicing the machine in two in one powerful stroke.

“You’re early.”

“As are you.” She spent the entire walk over rehearsing her apology but still felt nervous at the sight of him. The force in him was a palpable storm, rising and crashing in him like a turbulent sea. “I apologize for the crudeness of our meeting last night. I was on edge about my new assignment.”

He turned around, face devoid of expression. “Take off that ridiculous mask, you will not wear it around me.”

She removed it, and made a point to bow her head in an attempt at deference, “I apologize. It’s intimidating, being assigned to work on the same ship as the most dangerous man in the galaxy. I—”

Dark eyes flashed with anger “Don’t do that.” His attempt to be the mighty, aloof leader was weak at best, and the facade cracked in mere seconds from his short temper.

She stuttered “I—I’m sorry, sir, I just—”

“Don’t speak to me like I am an idiot you can win over with groveling. It’s pathetic”

He reminded her of a caged animal, every muscle taut, as if to strike like a dire cat at a second’s notice. Trying to calculate any rational sense of action seemed futile. She took a deep breath, and decided to let go and leave it to the force.

Pretense gone, her voice dropped from diplomatic to blunt. “You told me to be here, so what do you want? I was hired by my cousin to protect Hux and the longer I stay here the longer I’m away from the post she paid for.”

Strangely, the change in tone calmed him “I want to know why.”

“After Snoke was killed by the Resistance girl, my cousin feared for the General’s safety- in part because she likes him and part because she makes decent pay off assisting the First Order in...
acquisitions. Knowing I have some abilities with the force, she wanted me to provide him with extra security. The only match for a force user is someone else who can manipulate the force.”

He tried to push the memory of the fight in the throne room with Rey from his mind. He looked off over her shoulder as if some secret was etched on the wall behind her “No... No there is more than that. You’re lying. I can feel it.”

Ichara’s heart jumped to her throat at the accusation “I, well,” her eyes dropped to the ground “My teacher... he abandoned me when I was young. I still have much to learn, and have had to make do over the years. Most of what I know is just reflex.” She looked up to lock eyes as she slowly walked to meet him across the room.

“You saw how unimpressive I was against you. If you had the time and patience, I would be honored if you could help me hone what little skills I have.”

He chewed his lip, the request reminding him of Rey. Kylo could see her face illuminated in a purple glow on Starkiller as he offered to guide her, he could remember her hand braced on his thigh as they fought the Praetorian guard…and could still feel the way she pulled against him to retrieve that saber... the way she betrayed him.

He was suddenly uncomfortable with Ichara’s presence, dizzy from the wave of emotions that rose up inside him.

His response was little above a whisper, “Get out.”

“I’m sorry, I-” She reached out to put a hand to his arm. Before she could finish her sentence he used the force to fling her back across the room towards the exit. She yelped when her knee connected at an odd angle with the scuffed metal floor, physically biting her tongue to distract her from the pain.

“Get. OUT.” he thundered, jabbing a finger at the door.

Her eyes were slits as she glared at him, summoning her helmet from that had been sent bouncing across the floor. She remembered the raging fires from her youth, using the memory to keep her anger shielded from his reach. It was so loud she was projecting it at him- beams falling as crackling flames licked the night sky.

Without another word she pushed to her feet and stormed out, refusing to give him the satisfaction of seeing her pain as she left.

After a brief stop to her quarters to grab her holopad and have a small breakdown, Ichara wiped the tears from her face and locked her emotions away to be dealt with later. She limped into the General’s office, making a conscious effort to unclench her jaw, trying to spare a tension migraine later.

Hux tried to hide how worried he was, but it was foiled by the fear in his voice “What happened?!?” The pronounced limp and somewhat disheveled appearance made him assume the worst.

“He asked me why I was here, then threw me across the room and told me to leave.”

His mouth contorted as if he’d just bitten into a lemon. “Welcome to the joy of my existence.”

“Really?” She sounded surprised. “But you’re the General of the First Order.”
“Yes, I am well aware of that. Our dearest Supreme Leader is a brute and has no respect for anything but himself. The best you can do is avoid him at all costs. Did he, ah, ask anything else?”

“No. He clearly wants nothing to do with me so avoiding him won’t be a problem. You must be one hell of a man to have dealt with him so long.”

He let a small smile slip at the compliment “It is a testament of my dedication to the First Order.”

“Hopefully, with my presence as a deterrent, it won’t be something you have to deal with anymore.” She sat in one of the two chairs across from his desk and pulled out her holopad, fingers flying across the screen.

“Anyways, don’t mind me.”

There was a flicker on his holopad as she sent her message and he grinned to himself.

It worked.

x
No dice.
I told you he was a cunt.
All else is well.
Thank you again
x

- As soon as the door closed Kylo collapsed to his knees with a ragged gasp; he felt like he was drowning. He didn’t know if he could look at her without thinking about Rey and being caught up in the emotions that plagued him. At this realization he felt familiar light across the force that suddenly moved as if it were standing behind him.

He stared at the ground, frozen, refusing to look over his shoulder, a tear slowly trickling down the jagged path of his scar. Of her scar. He wasn't ready to face her again, not with the burn of her betrayal still smoking across his skin. He didn’t move until he was sure he was alone.

With Snoke dead she was certain that the force bond between them had been broken. When Rey closed the ramp to the Millennium Falcon on Crait, however, she wasn’t entirely sure if Ben was actually in front of her or if it was their bond still functioning. The question lurked at the back of her mind, but the conflicting emotions stifled the desire to reach out and test it.

Rey had to wonder no longer.

Like a sandstorm, she felt enveloped in a swirling miasma of despair and darkness. Suddenly, she was there- a cold, dim room, with charred remains of droids scattered across the floor. A ragged sigh came from the hulking black figure kneeling amongst the destruction.

It was him.
She slowly stepped backwards, hoping he wouldn’t notice her; but he went rigid as soon as the thought crossed her mind.

*He knows.*

Seconds felt like eons, until Rose’s voice brought her back to the rebel ship.

“Rey… are you okay? You look like you-”

She launched herself into Rose, wrapping her arms around her neck; in part from pure gratitude and in part to hide the tears she felt gathering in her eyes.

“Rose! Thank you, just… thank you.”

Chapter End Notes

This one-shot off has actually grown a lot and I'm pretty excited about it.
I hope you all like it :)


Hux found it hard to work with her around at first, but after a week they had settled into a routine. He had to admit he relished the way staff nervously flitted their eyes to her as she hovered at his right hand like an ominous shadow. When he wasn't receiving daily reports she sat across from him, engrossed in reading on her datapad. Most of the messages he intercepted were brief and somewhat cryptic, aside from the correspondence to a few Corellians that owed her money. He noted that those were incredibly and impressively detailed.

He gave her an official ranking at the weekly meeting to make her presence more formal, and she proved her worth picking a few things from some less than honest officers. Currently, though, he was preoccupied with some major setbacks regarding the salvaging of the Supremacy. He was so frustrated with the failures of the Lieutenant that just left he seriously considered asking Ichara to force choke him just to see him suffer. She consoled him as they made their way to the bridge for his shift.

“Don’t be too worried about it, General. He lied to you- not maliciously, though.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“He’s intentionally presenting the worst case scenario as the most probable turnout. When the situation resolves more favorably, he’s expecting to be praised for bringing better results than expected. It’s good to have people beneath you vying for praise though- it means…..” She paused as the doors opened to reveal Kylo Ren waiting for them on the bridge. She continued it a noticeably colder tone “It means you’re respected. Fear and respect are two different beasts. When people respect you, they fight for you. When they fear you, they fight because of you. Two very different things when it comes down to the wire.”

A whole week without seeing him- I should have cherished the days more Hux lamented.

“Wouldn’t you agree, Supreme Leader?”

Hux winced, Stars, what is she doing

“I have no interest in your conversation,” he replied dismissively. “I told you not to-”

“I’m working.” she cut him off. His obsession regarding her headware grated on her nerves.
He glared at her for a moment before turning his ire to the General.

“The equipment from the throne room on the Supremacy. It's not here. Why is this?”

“Yes, ah, it would appear there are some difficulties regarding transports and the integrity of the ship. The structure requires further reinforcement before-”

Kylo whipped out his arm, and the general clawed at his throat as he felt the invisible hand crushing his windpipe.

“That is not an acceptable answer, General” he growled.

The tension she felt while in Kylo’s presence was bad enough, but seeing him choke her general caused something inside Ichara to snap. Her injured pride from the week prior was still smarted from being tossed like a ragdoll. The subtle pushing of boundaries between the two force users lept from shared scowls to a high stakes gamble; she decided to go all in.

”That's enough, Kylo Ren.” He looked at her mockingly and clawed his fingers even tighter. 

And what can you do?

“That is enough!” her voice vaulted across the bridge, shattering his concentration and causing him to release Hux. She shoved her hand forward and threw him back, hard, flying down the walkway of the bridge and into the transparisteel viewer. Kylo fell into a crumpled heap, head ringing from the blow as he struggled to recover.

She marched down the walkway, seething, letting the darkness guide her. Every foot fall could have been a thunder clap in the deafening silence of the bridge- it was as if her and Ren were the only ones breathing in the whole room.

She whispered in his head as she approached

I told you there is a difference between fear and respect.
If it came down to you or the general, who do you think the people in this bridge would rally behind?
If it came to you or me, who do you think would have the support of these men?

As he sat up, dazed, and realized she was standing over him. He could feel the mixture of fear… and amusement… crackling throughout the staff. Some of them were enjoying this, and most were hoping to see a brawl. Kylo felt like he was surrounded by enemies on all sides.

“Serves him right” “Stars I hope he doesn’t kill her” “I wonder if Hux would shoot him?” “If the scavenger beat him, can she?” “Haven’t seen a good fight in awhile”

Her voice in his head broke through the chatter “Don’t worry, I'm going to give you a way out.”

She reached her hand down to him.

“I apologize for my overreaction, Supreme Leader, it was completely inappropriate,” she said, more so announcing her statement to the bridge than speaking to the man at her feet.

He slapped her hand away as he rushed to stand over her. He was still a large and intimidating man,
but a certain edge was missing from his form. “Do you understand what you just did?” his voice was low, uncertain.

“I apologize, Supreme Leader”

Rather than use the force, he grabbed her throat with his massive, gloved hand, squeezing it tightly. She stared defiantly up at him, and he found himself hating that he was actually entertained by it all.

*Leave Hux alone.*

“I will send for you later. We will discuss the repercussions of your thoughtless actions.” he flung her aside and she stumbled to keep her footing from the shove. He stormed from the bridge, eyes focused on the door, refusing to so much as glance at the General as he passed. Any trace of enjoyment across the man’s face might cause Kylo to kill him on the spot.

After the doors shut behind him, there was an audible sigh across the bridge as the tension lifted. A light curve graced the corners of the General’s mouth as she returned to her post. She loved how even when he was happy, Hux still looked positively wicked.

He couldn’t keep the smug sneer from his face, and he thought he might drown in the satisfaction of the moment.

“I don’t believe that will be happening anymore.” she announced.

“Will wonders never cease.” he gently took her arm as she passed “I don’t know that I can ever thank the Baroness enough for sending you.” She turned her head, biting her lip as she lingered on his mouth before looking into his ice blue eyes. *If glaciers could burn....*

“I don’t know that I can either, General Hux, sir.” She smirked at the flush reaching his cheeks as she drew out the last few words.

The young lieutenant beside him leant close, “I’d be lying if I said I didn’t enjoy that, sir. He’s had it coming for some time”

Hux clasped his hands behind his back, pleased with the bemused faces of his crew. *That’s right, Ren, these are my men.* There was, of course, concern regarding the repercussions from Kylo’s temper, but he pushed them away for now.

Right now, he was having a wonderful day, and he was going to glean everything he could from it.

After basking in the afterglow of his victory over Ren, the pair returned to his office.

“Unless the ship is in danger of exploding, you will disturb me for no reason.” he ordered. The doors closed behind them and he punched his lock code into the keypad beside it.

She sauntered over to the transparisteel behind his desk, removing her helmet and staring out at the stars. “You know, Hux, I’d kill him for you if you asked nicely.”
He was on her as soon as the last word left her lips, spinning her around to face him and grabbing her by the neck of her armored collar, his lips crashing into hers. She slipped her hands beneath the greatcoat slung over his shoulders and pulled him into her.

“You are a blood thirsty beast, aren’t you” he whispered between fervent kisses.

“I will gut anyone who dares to threaten you, General Hux, sir.”

He growled at the response and pushed her up against his desk, kissing down her neck, hands working at the belt of her armor.

“And you would, too. So very powerful… so very... mine. ”

“I am, sir.”

With a yank he pulled the clasp free “Remove them” he ordered. She smiled and quickly obliged.

He removed his belt and folded it in half, using the end of the loop to lift her chin up. Hux wished he’d brought his crop to keep in his desk, despite how inappropriate it would be. He was already painfully hard, and the thought made him suck air sharply through his teeth.

“Open your mouth.” he put the leather between her teeth and pushed her jaw closed with his finger. “You will be silent, or you will be punished, understood?” She nodded, and he spun her around to shove her shoulders down onto his desk, one hand on her back holding her firmly in place. “Consider this a reward for a job well done.” he purred.

He teased at her entrance before shoving into her with his hips, holding himself inside of her for a moment before slowly pulling back to roughly thrust back into her again. There was a soft clink as the metal of her armor hit the desk with every push. He tilted his head to the side as he looked down at the force user spread before him.

Mine. His hand moved up to her shoulder to pull her back into him for a particularly hard thrust, as if he had to claim her at the thought. A moan escaped her at the sharp movements. He leant over the top of her, one had snaking around to grab her throat as the other slipped to dig his fingers into her hip. “Quiet, beast”, he warned.

She had attacked Kylo Ren, for him, and somehow spared them both his wrath. She was fearless, she was violent, and she was his. He pushed into her faster now, every thrust asserting his own power, his possession, of the woman pinned to his desk.

To be dominated by such a hateful, powerful man was pure decadence for Ichara- she found the darkness emanating from him completely intoxicating. He had been fairly aloof since they’d gotten to the ship, and she was afraid she might not get to have him again. Her hands moved to grasp the edge of the desk, and she ground her teeth into his belt as he railed into her. Quickening breaths fogged the leather surface with their heat, and a small whine escaped her throat.

His hand tightened at the sound and he growled in her ear, “You will do as you are told.”

He could feel her getting closer, and despite his orders a low, desperate sound came out with every panting breath. She swore at that moment she would kill entire armies with her bare hands for this man.

Her mind babbled promises as she reached orgasm, every clink of her armor on the desk pushing her
over the edge.

*I'd slay a legion for you, fuck, I'd bleed whole worlds for you, I'll put heads on pikes, I'll… fuck… Hux… oh fuck me oh fuck oh fuck…..*

Unbeknownst to her, she projected her thoughts and he could hear them whispering through his head- and it was possibly one of the most romantic things he'd ever heard.

Hux came so hard there were stars at the edge of his vision as he squeezed his eyes shut. He fell on top of her, pulling her tight, growling obscenities as he filled her. “You are… fuck… mine… mine, beast… you are… fucking… mine…” the words dissipated into heavy breaths.

They were a quivering mess, only standing by the grace of the desk beneath them. Finally he stood, straightening himself slowly, dazed. He admired the blossoming bruises he marked on her right hip and noted that the shame he felt on Canto Bight was nowhere to be found. Hux realized their dynamic had changed, and that maybe even he himself had as well.

He snapped out of his thoughts at the sound her of voice “You are a kind master, General Hux, sir.” she drawled, smirking at him.

Before she returned the helmet to her head he grabbed her wrist, leaning down to kiss her softly. “You have exceeded all expectations, Ichara.” she felt a slight shiver at the sound of her name on his lips.

“Thank you, Sir.”

They returned to the bridge, two creatures of absolute darkness, ready to rend any who would oppose them to shreds.

Chapter End Notes

I had so much fun writing this :)

Will be some Rey/Kylo interactions in the next chapter, and he's going to have a talk with the new resident force user. (oh no)
Kylo paced in his quarters, saber spinning angrily by his side in a tight circle. He hadn’t realized exactly how much Snoke had kept Hux in check. With a rabid force user at his heel, he barely waited for her to get settled in before toeing the line. She was right about his men, though. They weren’t loyal to Kylo at all, and he didn’t know how to change that.

They were nothing more than cogs in a machine; the General’s machine, and he was at a disadvantage simply by sheer numbers. He began to feel trapped, frantic the more he thought about it.

This is Hux’s ship, Hux’s army, Hux’s fucking side table! he thought as he sliced it in half.

The familiar light blossomed in his awareness, and turned to see Rey. He turned off his saber and slowly holstered it.

“What do you want?” he did his best to keep any tone of emotion from his voice, focusing on the frustration of the moment rather than how he felt about her... about what she did to him.

“I felt you across the force and it pulled me here. I didn’t come of my own accord.” she retorted, crossing her arms in a huff.

“I felt you across the force and it pulled me here. I didn’t come of my own accord.” she retorted, crossing her arms in a huff.

He raised his arms out to the side “Well, you’ll be glad to see I’m a prisoner on my own ship.”

“What do you mean?” She stepped towards him. Is this it? She wondered. Is this how I get him to turn?

“The people on this ship are more loyal to Hux than they are me, even though I am their Supreme Leader.” He shouldn’t be telling her any of this, but at this point he felt like it didn’t matter. She was the only one he really had to talk to anyways, and it made him feel somewhat pathetic.

“Why don’t you leave then?”

“And what, give myself to the Resistance to be locked away or executed?” He laughed derisively “Would you like that? I'm sure you would, after leaving me to die on the Supremacy.”
“I didn’t just leave you, I- I had no choice, I had to run, Hux was coming! We could talk to the Resistance, Ben, make them understand, maybe we could-”

“Stop. There will never be a place for me there. You know it.”

She looked up at him with determination in her eyes “There could be a place for you with me though, Ben. If you would just let me. You could teach me, show me my place in all this.”

He shook his head at her “No, I gave you that opportunity, and you attacked me. You’ve already chosen your place. If you want to learn, you’ll have to come to me.” His dark eyes stared into hers, and she swore she could feel his gaze brushing over her soul at the intensity. “I’ll teach you. It will just be you and I, away from the world. Hux would leave us alone and we could just be here together.”

“I could never be on the same ship as… as him. He’s horrible! Ben, please. You can leave.” the request sounded more plaintive than she intended, but her heart hurt for him. “I can feel how miserable you are; it doesn’t have to be like this. You don’t have to be alone.”

He looked away “Maybe I do…. Or-” when he turned back to continue his thought she was gone.

“Or maybe I don’t,” he whispered to the empty room. If Ichara wanted a teacher he would oblige her, and gain her loyalty in the process. He’d worked too hard and suffered too long to lose to a cur. Beating him at his own game would be doubly gratifying. His mind wandered over the different possibilities, plotting the best way to go about it.

The next afternoon he sent out for her.

“The General’s bitch- tell her it’s time she answered for her display on the bridge. Bring her to me.”

The troopers came upon her and Hux walking together down one of the corridors and stopped them awkwardly.

“Um, General, the Supreme Leader has requested her presence, uh, now. He said it’s about something that happened on the bridge.”

“And he called her a bitch” the second trooper chimed in.

Hux & Ichara narrowed their eyes and tilted their head to the side in unison.

The first trooper elbowed him “Shut up! Er, he’s right though sir, he did. Um, she needs to come with us though, I know we’re supposed to be on patrol but he ordered us himself, so we need to get her and get back. Phasma will punish us for abandoning our post.”

His heart sank to his stomach. Ren wasn’t particularly sadistic, but he was volatile and unpredictable. The General feared for her in his hands.

“Where exactly are you two imbeciles taking her?”

“His quarters, sir.”
He turned to her, face pale “I will send two members of my guard to stand watch to ensure he doesn’t go too far.”

“General, I’m not afraid of him.”

“I know, dear, but you should be.” He hadn’t meant for the term of endearment to slip out, and now he felt foolish above all else.

She reached down and squeezed his hand, “I’ll let you know how it goes… dear.”

“Oh alright.” he huffed at her as she left with the troopers, unsure if she was actually returning the kindness or mocking him.

-

His quarters were larger and darker than she expected- saber gouges were scattered across the walls, making the room even more ominous. She continued on, stepping carefully and gently setting her helmet on a chair. The room was empty, and hallways lead off in 3 different directions. The left was his bedroom, which she quickly closed the door to. The second was a much longer hallway with a door at the end. She crept silently down, the hiss of doors opening revealed a half circle shaped room. It was lined with memory banks and ancient books, and the outer wall was transparisteel from ceiling to floor, as if you could fall out into the stars. It was beautiful.

Books were incredibly rare- no one had bothered making them in centuries. Her eyes scanned the titles, stopping when she reached a shelf in High Sith. I can’t decide what would be worse, throwing him across a room or stealing a book. She mused. One spine in particular made her heart stop. Stars, is it…?

“Fuck it, I’m already this far.” she muttered, too engrossed to feel the shadow creeping behind her. She pulled the novel down and started quickly flipping through the pages, still gritty with the sands of Korriban after all this time. “Yessssss” she whispered as she found the page she was looking for. Drain Life… I know the beginning but not…. Yes! This is the complete text!

Kylo crept up from behind and watched her with amusement; this was completely unexpected. It did, though, confirm his suspicions that she was lying about more than she admitted to on their first meeting. He had decided to use her own preachings against her, and manipulate through respect than fear. It might be a long game, but he hoped to sharpen Hux’s own blade against him.

“The Grimoire of Naga Sadow”

She slammed the book and clutched it to her chest as she spun around.

“Yes, I, ah, suppose it is. I’ve never seen this many books in one place, it’s impressive.”

“What would you want with that? Does Sith lore interest you?”

“I… consider it a hobby.” Her heart was pounding and she did her best to fight the panic of adrenaline that shot through in her.

He smiled, but it only served to frighten her even more. “Reading High Sith is more than a hobby. Who was your teacher? Be honest with me, I don’t want to pull it from you.” he threatened.

Dredging up memories of the past brought up old hurt. She used this to draw on for strength, steeling
herself and replying coldly. “He is irrelevant. He abandoned me and now he's dead. A fool, dedicated to the light.” she spat the word with genuine disgust. “His apprentice struck him down in his weakness and he deserved it.” the vitriol he felt on the bridge came back to her face as she continued. “That pathetic man has no claim to who I am, I taught myself everything of value that I know. I dedicated my entire life to learning what no one else could teach me.”

Kylo noticed he struck a nerve, and he enjoyed it- she was more forthcoming when angry. He strolled over, looking her up and down. “You seem fairly advanced, both in skill and strength. Strange. When you came to me in the training room, you said you didn’t know much. Reading Sith isn’t a “reflex”.”

“I lied.” she said, bluntly. “I didn’t want you to see me as a threat.”

From behind her, he leant down over her right shoulder, his breath hot on her neck. She smelled like incense and iron. “Should I, Ichara? See you as a threat?” he whispered.

She was grateful for her armor, it hid the gooseflesh that pricked across her skin at hearing his name on her lips. “No. Harming you would serve no purpose.”

“And how do I know you aren’t lying?” His lips almost brushed the tip of her ear, and her breath hitched.

“You’ve called me here to decide if you should kill me or not. Lying would be pointless.”

“Hmm. And what would you do, given my position?” He burned like an inferno, and she could feel the heat of him radiating on her back. She flinched as she felt his gloved hand tuck a lock of hair behind her left ear before drifting down to come around and lightly grab her throat.

“You wanted to 'snap my neck’, wasn’t that it?” Kylo pulled against her slightly and she pressed back into his solid chest. “Answer me. Did I hear you properly on the bridge?”

She closed her eyes and clutched the book even tighter, cursing her body for betraying her as she felt heat pool in her stomach. The predatory way he wrapped his arms around her lit a flame of lust aside the fear. Flames. Fire. She thought of fire. “Y-Yes.” he could feel her throat bob as she swallowed nervously. “If I was in your position, I would have killed without hesitation.”

His saber crackled to life and she jumped at the sound; a low laugh rumbling in his chest at her reaction. He held it out in front of her face, the brightness of the crimson blade burning her eyes. “And I almost did… but I saw something in you on the bridge. Not the weak, sniveling girl from the training room. No, I saw something of value- I saw strength, and the willingness to use it.” He released her and holstered his saber.

“If you want a teacher I will oblige you, but know that it won't be easy. Understood?”

“Understood.” She didn’t realize how heavily she was breathing until he let her go.

He studied her face, looking for a lie. What he saw was honesty and a touch of fear. Perfect.

Hux will lose his dangerous little game.

“If I find you worth the time and effort, I may even take you on as an apprentice, in time.”
The audacity... she brushed the thought away before she even let it cross her mind. “Thank you, I'll do my best. Would it be alright if I borrowed this book?”

“It’s mostly lore, spells touted by charlatans claiming absolute power. But yes, you may. I will summon you for your first lesson in time, and you will tell me what you have learned of the Sith from this book.”

“Thank you, Supreme Leader.”

He grabbed her arm as she went to leave. “But tell me, why fire?”

She stuttered at the unexpected question “I, um, I was burned badly when I was younger; I almost died. I used to tell people it was from flying too close to the suns to play it off. I don't like to talk about it.”

She snatched her arm away and flew down the corridors back to her quarters, knuckles white under her gloves as she clutched the book to her chest. The terror from what just happened finally sunk in, and she couldn’t get to the refresher fast enough. She vomited bile, dry heaving into the sink. Trembling hands turned the knobs, splashing cold water over her face.

“One step closer.” she told her reflection, as if appeasing it would help. “We’re so close. So close. One step closer.”

Ichara had intended on going to see Hux to let him know what happened, but all she wanted to do was sleep. She typed up a quick message instead.

- All is well. I was going to tell you in person but I am exhausted. 
Will fill you in tomorrow before daily reports. 
We both appear to be safe from murder at the moment. 
Sleep well.
-

She pulled a bulky bracelet, reminiscent of an Imperial cuff, from the drawer beside her bed. A small screen flashed to life, informing her its contents were low. She rustled around in the drawer looking for a small, blue vial. “No… oh come on, where is it…. Ugh.” She fell back onto the bed. “I at least have enough for tonight.”

She tapped out a message to her cousin.

- Can’t find sedative, sending coordinates. 
It is imperative I have it by tomorrow night. 
(Liquor would be nice too) 
We are one step closer. 
Much love, 
Chara.
-

She pressed a button, and the remaining sedative shot into her wrist. A timer was set to inject a counteracting stimulant to wake her. Without it she could easily sleep an entire day before waking groggily. The sedative gave her a dreamless, and therefore safe, sleep. She sighed as she felt it course through her veins, escaping the stress of her world for just a little while.
Hux had stayed up, trying to keep himself occupied as he waited to hear from her. He was relieved to when his holopad finally pinged with a message bearing her signature. As he started to get ready for bed, the stealth program flashed with a new transmission. He pulled up her message to the Baroness, and his heart dropped.

“I knew it. I knew there was something else going on. I’d be a fool to think otherwise. One step closer? We? Who is she poisoning? Who??” he yelled at his holopad as if it would answer back.

He laid in bed staring up at the ceiling, grinding his teeth.

*If she lies to me, she will suffer a thousand times over.*

She was the one person he looked forward to seeing every day and was one of the closest things to a friend... and more... that he had.

More than anger, he felt hurt at the thought of her betraying him, and cursed himself for the weight in his chest.

*You knew better than this.*

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter is a bit tumultuous. We get more backstory on my rabid OC, and some fluff, finally. lol.

*Fun Canon fact- Naga Sadow was a super powerful Sith lord, and most Sith magic was thought to be lost with time, especially considering how the Rule of Two (the apprentice can only become master when they kill theirs, and then must take another apprentice, etc) encouraged Masters to keep some secrets for themselves.

It's thought that Palpatine used the ability to Drain Life from Padmé to keep Anakin alive (which is 100% what I subscribe to bc Padmé was too much of a badass to die from the sads)*
In the mornings, she’d started meeting him at the lift and they’d walk to his office together. Any change in routine for a creature of habit was concerning, and she found herself somewhat worried. He was already in his office when she showed up to her shift, angrily typing through forms.

“I see you got up early today.”

“Well, apparently the incident on the bridge instilled some kind of twisted respect in our Supreme Leader. He said he’s decided not to kill me, but train me instead. Definitely unexpected. It’s a strange truce, almost.”

Is this the “we”? Is this how Kylo Ren intends to dispose of me, through her? Likely why he took her behavior so coolly yesterday, it was probably planned. I should have suspected right then. I’ve been a fool. Invited the fox into the coop, and then fucked her. I’m a disgrace.

“Oh, that sounds lovely. Perhaps when your contract is up he can buy you next.” He didn’t mean to be so snarky, but he just couldn’t help it. He’d intended being cautious throughout the day, but the lack of sleep made it hard for him to control himself.

She removed her helmet to look at him incredulously. “Excuse me? Did I do something to upset you?”

He put his face in his hands for a moment before looking up at her. “I’m sure you are aware, Ichara, that I am responsible for an entire army that is trying to chase the equivalent of rodents across the galaxy. What you do or do not do has no bearing on what is important to me right now.” he spat.

She stood up, confused, and put her hands on her hips. For some reason he was furious, she could feel it, but didn’t know why.

“I know you have a lot to shoulder, but I’m your ally in this. You should know that.”

“What I know is that you are is irritating and distracting.”
“Hux.” She leant down and put her hands on the desk to look him in the eye. “What. is. Wrong. with. you.” She half smiled in an attempt to lighten the mood. “What, are you jealous that Kylo and I-”

“Jealous?” he snorted derisively “Over what? Who do you think you are?!” he leant forward into her face, and the anger at himself for both trusting and letting her hurt him bubbled to the surface. “You are nothing more than a hired-gun, oh beg my pardon, a hired-lightsaber, I found in a whorehouse. There’s a thousand more out there like you I could hire and I wouldn’t have to fuck any of them. Actually, the more I think about it, the more I think that’s exactly what I’ll do when I’m free of you. Now, I have pressing issues to tend to today and you will just get in the way, so please leave.” he sat back in his chair and waved his hand towards the door.

“You’re dismissed. Get out of my office. Go. Perhaps our Supreme Leader can find some use for you.” his voice was cutting, expression twisted with contempt.

She was completely taken aback by his tirade and could only stare back at him, brow furrowed and mouth agape. “Oh.” she blinked back tears as she retrieved her helmet. Never had she been self-conscious about her actions, ever, but his judgment actually wounded her.

“I’m, ah, sorry to bother you, sir” her voice was soft, surprising both of them. She turned and slowly made her way to the door. Before she left she cleared her throat and paused as if to say something, but decided against it and just left.

Hux growled and hurled his holopad at the wall in an uncharacteristic fit of rage.

“Look at me. I’m no better than them.” he shouted, hiding his face in his hands. He would have rather she tossed him across the room, choked him, tried to outright kill him, or something… anything other than what she just did. She looked genuinely upset, and he was second guessing everything he’d suspected- he felt like he was going mad.

He was still lost in thought when Phasma entered. Whenever he needed something done right the first time he called on her, and yet again she did not fail him. “Sir, it is a vial of Conergin, about 30 doses. Doctors use it to put patients under for surgery. It was in the shipment from Canto Bight.”

“That is a very troubling find indeed, thank you Phasma.” he said wearily. He took the vial and spiked it into the trash can so hard it shattered into a thousand pieces on impact.

“Sir, all do respect... you look like shit. Did you not sleep?”

“How did you come to this conclusion, sir?”

He pulled up the message on his holopad and spun it around so she could read it. “I put a ghost program on her device, all her communications come through me first. It makes sense- I was essentially forced to take her with me. I knew there had to be some game behind it.”

“Not the conclusion I would draw exactly, but it is strange. I’ll keep an eye on her, sir.”

He felt a little less alone with her help.
Ichara was restless in her quarters and left to go to the hangar. She could feel every eye on her as she stormed down the corridors, her wounded feelings quickly bubbling into a fit of indignant anger. She intentionally left her helmet off, and his men were little short of gawking at seeing her face after going everywhere masked. One lieutenant was blatantly just staring at her as she waited for the lift.

“Am I really that hideous?”

“No, ma’am, I was actually wondering why you wear that thing at all.”

“Oh, well that’s sweet.” It came out a little more sarcastically than she meant.

He pulled at his collar nervously “I’ll be getting drinks at the officer’s cantina later, if you, you know, if you want a drink or are just bored or…”

“Thank you, Lieutenant, but I…” She was generally above pettiness, but Hux hurt her feelings and she was livid about the entire situation. Something had happened, and he wouldn’t tell her what, so she would just pick the scab till he did. “Actually… if you ask General Hux, and he gives you permission to take me, I’d love to join you… what’s your name?”

“Arrich, Ricard Arrich.”

“Ah, Lieutenant Arrich. If he agrees, come call on me later.” She stepped forward and ran a finger down his chest. “Call it a date.” She smiled wide before turning to get on the lift.

The hollow joy at imagining the General’s ire was short lived, though. She dug through her shipment from Canto Bight and there wasn’t a vial in sight. What? No. Nononono….

She grabbed one of the liquor bottles, smashed it on the ground, and screamed all of her frustrations out at the crate, hands clawed out in the air in front of her, looking absolutely insane.

Hux smiled bitterly as he watched the scene on his holopad. “Foiled, beast?” he whispered.

She stalked over to the trooper behind the receiving station console. “Who received this?”

“I did ma’am, what seems to be-”

She force choked him and held him in the air, yelling up at the sputtering man, “Something is missing, and you are going to return it to me!”

“I don’t know what you mean ma’am, I , hck, didn’t open it, I promise”

“He’s telling the truth.”

She dropped the trooper and whirled around to see Phasma standing directly behind her.

“I have been on post in this area all morning. No one would remove anything under my watch. Punishment would be swift.”

She sighed. “Thank you, Phasma. Unfortunately the alternative is something I didn’t want to consider.” she removed the remaining two bottles of liquor from the crate and shoved one at Phasma “You’re the only competent person on this ship, myself included. Thank you.” Phasma reluctantly took it, and Ichara made her way back to her quarters.
Would Ruxinn really do this to me? I know it hasn’t gone as fast as we thought... but if she is trying to force my hand... The thought of her cousin betraying her wasn’t something she had considered, but it would make sense. The woman was never known for kindness, but as she took over the strip she’d become bolder in her actions.

Ichara sighed and collapsed onto her couch, cracking open the Spira whiskey she had sent. “I can appreciate her obnoxiously expensive taste though”, taking a long pull from the bottle. She picked up the book Kylo let her borrow “This is a positive development, actually, that ginger was distracting me from the real tasks at hand.” she said aloud to herself, flipping back to the page she was trying to read yesterday.

“Charlatans…” she laughed. “God that man has no idea how much he doesn’t know.” The liquor was already tingling her in extremities as she laid across the couch with her book.

-Hux was preparing to leave his office for the day and attempt to get some rest, but the words from her message kept echoing in his head.

Tonight.

“She needed it tonight. Let’s see what her and Kylo Ren come up with instead.”

A new lieutenant almost ran face first into him as he rounded the corner.

“Oh, General Hux, I was coming to see you.”

Hux raised one eyebrow and said nothing.

“Sorry, sir, I have an odd question regarding, um, your bodyguard. I just realized I never caught her name.”

_Traitor? Murderous bitch? “Captain Orgida”._

“Yes sir, I was wondering if I could have permission to take her to the cantina, I know with her work she might not be allowed to, so she told me to ask you.”

“Oh did she.” _I see your game, beast. “Yes, Lieutenant… ah…”_

“Arrich, Ricard Arrich, sir.”

“Yes, Lieutenant Arrich. Tell her I said you can do whatever you want with her.” he said as he shoved past him.

The lieutenant smiled and pulled out his holopad, searching her name in the directory to send her over a message.

-Hux said we can do whatever we want, looks like you’re off work tonight. See you at 20:00? -
She was jolted awake by the buzz of her holopad, accidentally drifting off to sleep on the couch during her reading. She rubbed her eyes as she groggily pulled up her messages. The sting of the text quickly cleared the cloud of sleep from her mind.

“Whatever we want. Oh did he.” She imagined Hux had used that exact phrasing to implicate god only knows what.

- Sounds lovely, Lieutenant.
- 

She grabbed the bottle by the couch and took another deep pull. “Time to apply more pressure.” It took some searching, but she pieced together the outfit she wore when she first met the General. “Hired light-saber. What an ass.” she muttered to herself as she primped for the evening “That’s not even a thing, and if it was he couldn't afford me.”

The conversation noticeably stopped when they entered the cantina. Already slightly buzzed, she sauntered over to the bar and ordered a double.

“Sorry Arrich, I don’t think your friends like me much” she laughed bitterly, eyes searching the crowd for one even half friendly expression.

“No one has really, you know, seen you before. You’ve been here almost a month, and after the thing with the Supreme Leader...” he trailed off.

She slammed her glass down and looked him dead in the eye. “Do not ever bring that up again, I paid dearly for what I did.”

“I’m sorry, it’s just, I’ve never really met a force user before.”

“I’m just like any other person, except I can float things. It’s not as glamorous as people make it out to be.”

Despite the ulterior motives for going out, she found she was actually enjoying herself. It was easy to forget the people around her were fellow human beings. The liquor loosened her tongue and she spoke with him at length about Bakura, her time spent with a Twi’lek smuggler, but made sure to say nothing about how she ended up on the ship. The night got late, and soon it was just the two of them and a few other officers at the bar.

He looked around, scanning the bar, before leaning in to ask her a question. “So what’s General Hux like? I’ve hardly ever said more than a few words to him.”

She swirled the drink in her glass as she chose her words carefully. Suddenly she didn’t want to drink anymore, setting the glass down on the metal bar with a clink.

“Uptight.” she sighed “He’s got a lot to deal with, though, I really can’t blame him.”

“Not too uptight for you to fuck him, though, right?”

Her jaw dropped. “Excuse me you little shit?” she went to stand up, but stumbled backward as her
legs buckled beneath her before falling to the ground. *Oh fuck. Oh fuck me it’s a trap.*

Hux had been watching her through the cameras all night and decided he’d had enough. He was angry, but he couldn’t stand to see her embarrass herself. He stormed to the cantina to drag her out.

*Perhaps she’ll admit something in her recklessly inebriated state*

The remaining three officers walked over and pulled her to the back of the bar.

“You’re going to die for drugging me, you son of a bitch!” she called out “Oh look, it’s Peavey. Of course it is.” she threw her head back and cackled “You’re still angry I told the General about the strong opinions bouncing around in your head, aren’t you. You shouldn’t be so rude.” he kicked her in the side and she grunted at the impact, taunting the man with an even wider smile.

“I might have to respect Hux because his father was a great man, but you? You don’t belong here. You’re gutter trash. A mercenary. You might be able to use the force, but what does that amount to now? Nothing.”

Two men lifted her up off the ground and Peavey reached back and punched her square in the face. “*Augh!*” Even her grasp on the force seemed slanted, and it was taking everything she could to focus. She licked the cut on her lip, relishing the pain, drawing from it in an attempt to center herself.

Hux had entered the bar and found it deserted. He almost turned to leave till he heard her cry out.

*If she is fucking him I might just kill them both.* Shaking with rage and exhaustion, he made sure to take the time to be stealthy as he crept to the back.

“I dedicated my *life* to the First Order,” he punched her again

“You fat sack of shit”

“and you *fuck* your way to Captain of Security in a matter of days?”

“You should try it, it’s really quite nice.” she sneered.

He backhanded her at the taunt. “Hux is pathetic. He’s weak willed. An embarrassment.”

“You aren’t fit to speak his name.” she spat blood in his face.

He wrapped two meaty hands around her neck and squeezed “This military needs *real* leadership. You’re going to die tonight, and then I’m going to kill your pet, too.”

“Sorry, I’m a *what*?”

Peavey froze and turned slowly to see Hux standing behind him, blaster drawn. “You were describing my characteristics. What is it that I am again, Captain Peavey?”

“Sir- I- uh- she attacked us out of nowhere, we were defending ourselves.”

“Oh shut up, Peavey, you wretched pig. Release her.”

Caught, he decided to double down- “Sir, bringing her here, it’s not *right*, it-”
With a flick of his wrist, Hux placed two blaster bolts in the foreheads of the two men still holding her.

“You dare tell me how to run my army, Peavey?” he glared at him down the barrel of his blaster, now aimed on the man in front of him.

“Your father would be ashamed!” he bellowed.

“My father is dead!” Hux yelled, a lock of stray hair falling into his face.

“Don’t worry, Peavey, you can tell him all about it yourself.” Ichara kicked him in the back of the knee and he fell to the ground. He went to stand but she tackled him, wrestling him to his back. Her fury had found her, and the doomed man looked up, horrified, as she pinned him in place with the force.

She called out to Hux, blood streaked across her purpling face. “Grab the other one. He’s next.”

He looked over to the pale lieutenant petrified with fright against the bar. “Sir, please, they made me do it, Peavey said he’d promote me if I brought her here!”

“Oh, don’t worry, I understand.” Hux smiled as he whipped him across the face with his blaster, the smaller man cowering on the ground beneath him.

“Not bad for gutter trash, aye Peavey?” she held out her hand and he screeched as bones popped, cracking beneath his skin. “You’re lucky I’m intoxicated, it makes me impaaaaatinent.” she sung out. “Shhh… it’s almost over.” She straddled his writhing form and put her hands around his neck. Her lips moved as she whispered and his body went rigid while her blossoming bruises began to dissipate, the split on her lip sealing shut. It worked.

Arrich gasped at the sight “Oh that’s right- there’s still the other one.”

She pulled him over to her with the force, still straddling the now dead Peavy, and grabbed his hair, yanking his head back to look up at her “You little fucking idiot. I have to knock myself out every night just to fucking sleep, you really think a couple bendozi in my drink is going to touch me? And then you speak to me how you lowly ingrate?”

Son of a bitch. She uses it to sleep. Hux felt like a madman for jumping to such a rash conclusion over the vial.

He was brought out of his self-loathing by a bubbling scream as she cracked the lieutenant's jaw to reach into his throat, ripping his tongue from the root. She dangled it in front of him as he flailed with her hand still hooked into his jaw, holding him like a caught fish.

“You're going to choke on your words.”

She shoved his tongue into his bloody maw and watched with amusement as he clawed at his throat, gurgling on the blood and flesh blocking his air. She tossed him aside and rose, swaying slightly. It was that brutality that made her so feared on Bakura.

“It’s cruel but it’s necessary… to remind me where my place is in all this.” she intoned, standing to look down at the body twitching on the floor.
Hux walked over, unfazed by the gruesome display around them, and wrapped his arms around her, “I’m glad you’re alright.”

Allowing herself a moment of weakness, she leaned into the embrace.

“The most pathetic thing about this is that I was actually enjoying myself. Said it was reminding me of their humanity.” she sighed. “I suppose it did.” He pulled her tighter and rested his cheek on the top of her head, the familiar smell of her incense made his heart skip. He hoped that his behavior from earlier in the day might be forgiven or forgotten after the events of the evening. Hux would be content to just lay with her the rest of the night and make sure she was alright.

“I’m so sorry, Ichara, I-”

“No… no what are you doing?” She shook her head as she pushed him away “I’m a whorehouse gun for hire, remember?” her voice started to shake the more she continued “I’m an irritation, right? Replaceable? You put me in my place, and I needed it. Thank you.” A lone tear slid down her face and he swore it drug his heart down with it. “Goodbye, Armitage.” the last word was barely a whisper. He went to reach for her as she left but she shoved him off and stormed out of the cantina.

Tears mixed with water as she sat in the floor of her shower, washing the taint of the day off her skin.

“From feared and revered to hated and reviled. I should never have set foot on this godforsaken ship. Just focus on the prize, Ichara. You’ve forgotten why you’re doing this.” She reached over her shoulder to touch the top of the scar on her back. “Never forget why you are doing this.”
Machinations of a Ghost

Chapter Summary

I'm not happy with this chapter either, I hope it's not awful. I've been so grumpy lately.

Anyways.

Nightmares, Arguments, Phasma is so patient bless her, Kylo is being kind of awful

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first vial broke, and now the second one wasn’t even there, she grumbled as she crawled under the covers.

Orgida assured her she had ordered it and was questioning those who may have had access to the shipment on her end, but Ichara was half convinced she didn’t send it at all to force her into action. Increasingly power hungry after taking over the entire block in her area on Canto Bight, she’d set her eyes on loftier goals; one of which she was convinced she needed the Supreme Leader in her pocket for.

A smile crossed her face at the thought of her cousin’s naivety. Ichara wished he was even a fraction as simple as most men, it would make everything so much easier. She had learned much about the scavenger girl he was obsessed with through Ruxinn’s tireless digging, thinking she could sway him with a similar woman. Kylo would slice her down the middle on the spot at the presentation of a knock-off Rey.

She closed her eyes and rubbed her temples, exhausted from constantly guarding against attacks—both those real and imagined.

“I’ll probably be fine tonight. At least there’s liquor.” she said aloud, as if hearing the words would bring more reassurance. The nightmares had all but disappeared during her stay on Bakura, but she was afraid the bizarre events of the night might summon them from the depths of her memories once more. There was a moment that she couldn’t center herself, as if the force was slippery and hard to hold; it made her feel helpless and shook her more than she had realized.

Always a deep sleeper, it took a lot to rouse her. It wasn't till the smell of burning was thick and the sound of screams echoed through the night that she woke. She ran out of the hut, eyes watering, coughing and choking on the smoke. She stumbled and almost fell, but was caught by someone tall and lanky—she couldn’t see for the ash burning in her eyes.

“You have to come with me, we’re going. There is nothing here for us.” The voice was familiar.

“What? I… I don’t know what you’re talking about, I have to-” she motioned back to the quarters she had just left, but she was cut off before she could finish.
The voice went cold. “There is no time for this.”

A sudden shock shot through her core that was so intense she couldn’t tell if it was burning or freezing. She fell to the ground, gasping, trying to get her bearings through the waves of searing agony shooting through her body. In the torment time was abstract; she had no idea how long it took, but she summoned every ounce of effort available to crawl back inside and retrieve her saber. All she could do was look up as the support beams above her, now riddled with crackling embers, fell. She tried to throw herself out of the way but it wasn’t enough- her leg was trapped, and the smell of her own flesh burning assaulted her senses.

Between the pain and the smoke and the flames she didn’t even know if her screams made a sound.

Kylo could feel pure terror across the force, jolting him from his sleep. Without even taking a moment to think he grabbed his saber and raced to her quarters. He came across two troopers running from that direction and threw them out of his way. The feelings intensified as he neared her location, and he was almost certain someone or something was trying to kill her.

“Ichara! Ichara!” The voice from the fires beckoned to her, and her eyes shot open. Panicked, she headbutted Kylo Ren right in the face.

He stumbled backward, cursing as blood poured from his nose. Reality was fighting to pull the fingers of the night terror from her perception as she sprinted past Kylo to grab her saber.

“Stop.” He reached out and froze her in place with the force. “Calm down. I could feel your fear across the force, like someone was killing you.”

“You almost did.” she growled.

“What?”

The panic of the dream state started to slip away, returning her to reality. “I… sorry… I had a nightmare…” She jumped when she felt his finger run down the scar on her back, a deep purple rivulet from shoulder to hip.

“A lightsaber”

“Yes”

“Mine too… the scar on my face… you never asked.” He released her and she turned to look up at the man that gave it to her. After all the years painted in bloodlust and threaded with wistful dreams of revenge- she couldn’t find it in her heart to hate him like she once did. He that rushed to save her- someone he knew had nothing but ire for him- and now stood with his brow furrowed in concern and blood smeared across his face.

“Oh stars, Kylo, I’m so sorry-” she ran to her kitchenette to grab a hand towel to clean the blood away.

“I’m fine-” he went to push her back, but she brushed his hand aside. Still reeling from the nightmare, she wanted to do something, anything, to distract her from the wave of crushing anxiety that usually followed.
“Stop. I did this, let me help.” She could feel him staring down at her as she gently dabbed at his face.

“How did it happen?”

“I- it, ah,” she struggled to craft a vague, half-truth response, afraid he’d know if she lied “It happened a long time ago, from someone I trusted. I’m sorry I woke you, I know you need to get back to sleep.”

He knew all too well how soul-crushing night terrors could be. At that moment his distrust of the strange woman was replaced with empathy and he reached up, gently taking her hand and lowering it from his face.

“It’s fine. I can stay if you-” The doors opened to interrupt him, and Hux burst in- great coat slung over black pajamas, hair a mess, with his blaster drawn.

“What the hell did you do, Ren?!” he yelled. One of the troopers he’d smashed into the wall had come to and stumbled to his feet, running again down to the General’s quarters to alert him to a disturbance and Kylo’s presence, failing to recount the events in proper order.

Kylo reached a clawed hand out to him but Ichara snatched it back. “Everything is fine, we felt something through the force is all. You wouldn’t understand.”

Hux reluctantly lowered his blaster, chest heaving from sprinting down the corridors. “You still need to tell me what happened, as General of this ship-”

“As General of this ship I can tell you it doesn’t concern you! I’m fine, I just need to rest.” It was all too much, and she needed everything to just stop. “Thank you, . I need to lie down. Goodnight.”

She rushed out of the room and threw herself on the bed, leaving them alone with each other. She didn’t let the tears fall till she was sure they were both gone.

*This place is going to be the absolute death of me.*

Hux stormed down the hallway, hoping the menace behind him would leave him alone. He wasn’t so lucky.

“What was that about, Hux?” Kylo called after him.

He pinched the bridge of his nose as he turned around, exhaling with a huff before he replied. “I was woken by stormtroopers alerting me to a disturbance.” Kylo didn’t stop walking until he was uncomfortably close to Hux, his voice velveteen as he threatened him.

“If you ever pull a blaster on me again, it will be the last thing you do.” The black undershirt and sleep pants made Kylo appear more human, but the seemingly constant anger simmering just below the surface set an air about him that was undeniably intimidating.

Hux’s eyes trailed along the smear of blood on Kylo’s face as he stood over him. “Yes… Supreme
“Goodnight, General.” He paused for a moment more to glower at him before shouldering past. 

Whispers flew through the ranks the next day.  

“I heard she ripped out Peavey’s bones”
“Well I heard he broke her jaw first- Darren in security said she looked all messed up on the camera footage”
“She bit the new Lieutenant’s throat out”
“Hux ordered her do it, he’s always hated Peavey.”
“Mica said they actually had sex on top of their dead bodies.”

“Definitely my style, but no, it would appear I’m not the General’s type.”

The gossiping pair gasped at the vocoded voice from behind. Ichara put a hand on each of their shoulders and leant down between them “And no- Peavey attacked me, and I didn’t bite anything.” She pushed past them as she made her way to the General’s office, already 30 minutes late. Gossip disgusted her, but she was thankful it was about the altercation as opposed to Kylo running to her quarters at two in the morning. Her head was pounding and her nerves were still frayed from the rollercoaster that was day prior.

Hux leapt to his feet when she entered. “You’re late, I was worried, I was about to come check on you. What happened last night?”

“Sir, I am ill and will be taking sick leave today. Should anyone try to murder you, please ask them to pause for a moment so that you may summon me.” She turned to leave and he called out to her-

“Ichara, stay for a moment, let me explain yesterday.”

“You did an excellent job of explaining yourself already, sir.” It had been years since she had allowed herself to care about someone enough to value their opinion of her. Not only was his malicious tirade unexpected, but he managed to cut her down with the precision of a surgeon’s scalpel.

Unaccustomed to having to persuade people, his temper flared and he responded reflexively. “I suppose you are right. Dismissed, then.” He fell back in his chair, cursing at his complete inability to hold his tongue as the doors closed.

Phasma stopped her in the corridor. “Are you alright?”

“Nothing a Castial hangover cure and a few ibuprofen can’t fix.”

“My men had nothing to do with what happened last night.”

“I know, Phasma. Thank you. I am aware that my presence has ruffled the troops, but assure them I’ll be gone in a few days.”

Hux was pacing when Phasma came into his office. “I heard. Explain.”

“I feel like an idiot- she uses the sedative to sleep. There was no great scheme, and the only one who
wanted to kill me was Peavey, apparently. I should have seen that sooner to be honest. Then instead of apologizing I just confirmed the horrible things I said to her yesterday.” The incident with Kylo last night was so strange he didn’t even want to broach that topic yet.

“He was always an arrogant prick. Old. Dated. It’s good that he can be replaced with fresh blood, though I’m perturbed you didn’t save him so I could deal with him myself. And your situation with your hired Captain is?” She was irked that a mere mercenary was given a title at all, let alone so quickly, but it was nothing she found worth being truly concerned with. After years of working beside him, she was familiar with his sometimes strange actions; they were usually part of a grander plot. This one she had yet to figure out, but had a few suspicions as to where it was going.

“She won’t let me explain myself. I said some fairly, ah, rude things to her yesterday and she refuses to let it go. I’m overly vexed with the whole situation,” he motioned towards his desk, “and now I can’t focus on a damn thing.”

Phasma walked over, grabbing him by his shoulders. “Stand still, you’re irritating me. You don’t know how to apologize, do you.”

“If I could just explain my behavior she’d understand, I-”

“Shut up, Armitage. You need to apologize. Do you want me to help fix this?”

He looked up plaintively, “I feel like I’m going mad.”

She raised an eyebrow, “You’re an absolute idiot. I’ll see what I can do.”

“Thank you Phasma, I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

“You likely would have been dead a long time ago, sir.” she sighed, “Probably from a heart attack.”

“You’ve got to keep your anger under control, Kylo, I can’t keep getting pulled away every time you have a feeling.” Rey huffed.

“Perhaps you are the one who needs to practice their self-control, scavenger.”

She recoiled at the last word. “That’s funny, coming from you.”

He was in his library, clenching and unclenching his fists at the news of the brawl last night, staring into space. Ichara had failed to mention it last night.

“How dare they touch her,” he muttered through his teeth. “They are beneath us. They are nothing. But now… now she will see where her loyalties should lie.” It seemed everything was falling into place simply because he had willed it to be.

She was confused and walked around to look him in the face. “They? What are you talking about? You know I will always be loyal to the Resistance.”

He realized the General wasn’t the only one he could manipulate with his plans and turned to look down at her condescendingly.

“Not you. You refused me, so I have found a new apprentice,” he said in a dismissive tone. “She
was attacked by scum and defended herself. I’m proud of her.”

Rey stumbled back at the news like a punch in the gut. “You… you what? You found another force user? And you’re going to turn her into a monster? I won’t let you! I’ll find her, I’ll-”

He laughed, low and dark “No, she was a monster long before she came to me. Self trained… no discipline… rough around the edges” he followed her as she stepped backward, closing the distance between them with each long stride. “In fact, Rey, she reminds me a lot of you.”

Jealousy rose in her throat, “You will never find someone like me, Ben Solo.” she retorted.

He let his old name wash over him and refused to let her use it as a distraction. “Then why don’t you come to me- you wouldn’t have to be lonely anymore. I know you are, you carry it in your eyes, your face.” She stopped when her back hit the bookshelf and he reached out as if to touch her cheek, but curled his fingers back “They don’t understand you. Not like I do- not like I can.”

“That’s not true.” her voice was small. In his closeness, her firey temperament from earlier disappeared like a candle blown out in the wind.

“But it is. That’s why she came to me, you know. She was hired as a soldier but people like us can’t live among them. They know nothing of what it is like to be what we are. All I had to do was wait for her to see that too… and she did.” He put a hand on the bookshelf behind to lean into her face; she could feel his breath tickling her lips from across the galaxy. “When will you?”

“I…. she disappeared.

“Oh thank the maker!” She balled her hands into fists to keep them from trembling. She wanted to warn General Organa of her son’s new apprentice, but there was no way to do it without telling her about the force bond. Rey hadn’t expected him to actually find another force sensitive person, and she found herself envious, of all things.

“They can be dark and horrible together, then.” she muttered, sliding down the wall of the utility closet she’d ducked into when she felt him. Sometimes she could tell when it was going to happen, and she was grateful to slip somewhere alone before being pulled away. The last thing she wanted to see was the face of one of her friends. Lying to them about the bond had been more taxing than she’d expected… and Kylo’s words still haunted her. “They don’t understand you. Not like I do- not like I can.”

A tear slid down her cheek. She was afraid that maybe, maybe he was right- and the acknowledgment made her feel so alone.

Kylo chewed his lip as he stared at the now empty space before him. Despite his indifferent demeanor, she still cut him to the quick every time he saw her. He yelled out and punched the shelf in irritation. The darkness flowed through him in response to the anger, and he made the decision to share the burden of his frustrations.

The rage had hushed to a still lethal simmer as he flew down the corridors like a black phantom, throwing everyone he came across into the walls and out of his way. Already furious, Rey’s presence was enough to push him over the edge. As far as he was concerned every person on that ship needed to be reminded who and what their Supreme Leader is.

“Sorry, sir, the General has specifically requested no visitors.”
He tilted his head “How insolent are you, to think you can tell me to do anything?” Kylo threw his guard down the length of the hall before he could answer and strode through the door; stopping abruptly when he realized she wasn’t there. Hux grumbled without looking up from his work.

“I swear on my blaster if you are still there when I look up I will cut you down where you stand.” he snapped.

“I warned you about that.”

He closed his eyes and exhaled slowly “Oh. Excellent. Ren.”

“Where is she?” Much to his irritation, she was always hovering around the General, never more than a few steps away. Her absence was concerning.

“I’m going to assume she’s in her quarters. She is feeling ill and doesn’t wish to be bothered.” Hux made sure to emphasize the last word as he glowered at him.

“What I’ve been told, is it true?” Kylo’s voice was menacingly soft as he approached the desk.

“Yes, Peavey attacked her and had intended on killing me after she was neutralized. It’s been dealt with. Phasma is going through the ranks to ensure there are no more traitors.”

“Is all of it true?” he stopped at the edge of the desk and leaned over slightly, making the General crane his neck to look up at him.

“I am afraid I don’t know what you mean, Supreme Leader.”

Kylo narrowed his eyes and reached forward, holding a clawed hand inches from his face.

“Oh, I think you do.” Hux ground his teeth as he tried to push him out of his head. It wasn’t something he had to endure often, but this time there was something more significant locked away other than the frequent death wishes he had for the figure in front of him.

“Why are you fighting it, General? Do you have something to hide?” he smiled softly, enjoying the obvious discomfort on his face “This is only going to make it harder on you.”

He felt himself crack, and suddenly Kylo was inside and around him all at once, slipping through his memories like a serpent. Flashes of emotion and thoughts flipped by like a picture book. He scowled and yanked his hand back, shaking his head in bewilderment.

“Why? What could she possibly see in you?” His voice was a mixture of curiosity and disgust.

Hux glared up at him, silent.

“You’re pathetic.”

He still refused to give him the satisfaction of a reaction, struggling to maintain a stoic facade.

“You were wise to push her away. She’d destroy you.” Kylo’s eyes searched his face, and though he couldn’t see it, he could feel the animosity emanating from him.
Hux looked down and slowly clasped his hands together on the desk in front of him, squeezing so hard he thought he might break his fingers.

“Are you quite done, Ren? Or do you have more business inside my head.” he said coolly.

“I'll leave you to your paperwork, General. Let this be a reminder of your… position…” he drawled, before turning to leave. Cutting the General down always seemed to soothe his nerves, and this particular session of torment was especially gratifying.

The doors closed and Hux released the tension that had stiffened every muscle in his body. Hatred in his chest burned so white hot he couldn’t even feel it, as if the fires of his rage consumed everything inside him and left nothingness.

Emptiness.

He brushed non existent dust from his data pad with trembling hands and continued working like nothing had happened, going about the rest of his day with the machinations of an automaton.

His anger thundered like a storm in the distance.

Reckoning was on the horizon, but it wasn’t quite time yet

Chapter End Notes

This chapter feels so disjointed. I hope it went okay friends.

Things will get better in a couple chapters, promise!

Thank you for sticking with me!
Phasma stood outside of Ichara’s chambers, a beleaguered sigh crackling through her vocoder. The irritating burden of politics only increased the further she climbed the ranks. Being the closest thing Hux had to a friend meant that she avoided most of the bureaucratic nonsense, but unfortunately it also came with its share of strange requests as well. She went to push the comm button but stopped at the sight of Kylo Ren storming around the corner.

“Captain Phasma.”

She straightened, grateful for the chrome helmet hiding the expression of pure disdain on her face. “Sir.”

“I didn’t take you for the social type. Perhaps if you spent less time fraternizing we wouldn’t have had the FN-2187 incident.”

His eyes darted down as she clenched her fists. “Perhaps another time, Sir.” One day I'll have his head on my pike

“If you weren’t so painfully loyal to Hux, I would have use for you.”

“I am loyal to the First Order, sir. If you need to give me orders, do it.”

He stared into her visor for a moment as if he were thinking “You’re dismissed.”

She marched past him, dreaming of the quickest ways to dismember someone that was about her height.

Ichara jumped when he entered her quarters unannounced. She had dimmed the lights, and the painfully bright hallway cast him as a hulking silhouette in the doorway. She scrambled to her feet, straightening what was essentially pajamas; silken shorts and a tight fitting camisole. (Her cousin had sent what she would consider ridiculous clothing, but had to admit it was very comfortable.)

“Supreme Leader.” she stuttered, "I-I’m sorry, I wasn’t expecting you.”

“I heard about the incident in the cantina and wanted to make sure you were alright. You should have told me.” His sudden concern for her well being was suspicious.

“It was nothing. They paid for what they did.” She quickly picked up her drink and finished what
was left. One drink had served to soothe her nerves, but this situation was a little much. “Oh, would you like a drink? I, er, sorry, this all caught me off guard.”

He invited himself to sit and reclined in the corner of her couch, spread out languidly, arm across the back. His relaxed body language clashed with the hardness of his eyes, fixated on her like a panther watching its prey.

“If you don’t mind.”

She retrieved another glass, and his eyes trailed the deep purple scar across her back down to the marred surface of her leg. He’d never seen this much of her.

“So how exactly did you get that?”

“My cousin sent me over a few bottles, I really don’t drink much, but-”

“No. The scar.”

“Like I said- someone I trusted turned on me. I don’t like to talk about it.” She was grateful her body blocked his vision- her hands shook as she poured, the stress of the situation only getting worse with every passing second.

She handed him his very full glass and sat back down, taking a long pull to steady herself. He cleared half the glass as he drank, studying her over the rim of the glass. He set the glass down and reached over to run a gloved finger down the rippled surface of her scarred thigh; she flinched at his touch. “And this is the fire.”

“Yes.”

He let his hand linger on her leg as he leant forward, eyes never leaving hers.

“Why are you so afraid of me? I can feel it... I can see it... So nervous.” The deceptive softness of his voice only served to make him more frightening.

“You’re powerful. I know what you’re capable of. And… I can’t predict you. You’re like looking at an obelisk through the mist. I see you, but I can’t quite make you out. It’s been so long since I’ve been around another force-sensitive I think I’ve forgotten what it’s like.”

Hux flashed across his mind, and he recoiled back, snatching his glass off the table and taking another drink before replying, “Too much time around weak people will make you dull. You’ve lost your edge.” he said harshly. She frowned at the insult. “But don’t worry, I’ll help you with that.”

“I suppose I have. Regular people are so simple, so easy to read... but lately I’ve found myself failing at even that,” she muttered bitterly, clearing her glass. The General’s tirade had upset her for a myriad of reasons- not only was she angry at herself for allowing the vulnerability, but the fact she hadn’t seen his turn coming was embarrassing.

Kylo raised an eyebrow and she immediately regretted the statement.

“A strange reply. Has someone in particular been giving you difficulties?”

Ichara stood quickly to refill her glass “Ah, not really, no. Just an observation” He finished his drink
and rose, trailing silently behind her. After she set her glass down, he grabbed her arm and roughly spun her around. She yelped in surprise at the sudden motion, not knowing he was behind her.

“So... You fear me... Are you afraid of Hux, too?” he growled. The eerily faux kindness from moments earlier had vanished.

“What would I have to fear from him?”

Kylo searched her face as if there was a different answer hidden there. “Then I can’t comprehend why you’d let him touch you. Its... disgraceful.”

“I, I don’t understand.” her heart fluttered in her chest like the flailing of a dying bird.

He pushed into her, pinning her against the countertop, steadying himself with one arm out against the cabinets behind her. His hair fell, blocking what little light there was as he leant over her.

“Yes you do. Tell me why would you lower yourself to that.” His irises were nothing but blackness, and he looked every bit the monster she’d imagined in her dreams. She simply stared at him, unable to speak, and he found the silence unacceptable. “Nothing?”

She shook her head, “I don’t have to explain this.” she went to move past him but he pushed into her harder and quickly wrapped the other arm around her waist, holding her in place against him.

“Yes, you do. Say it. Tell me why.” he demanded through clenched teeth.

The man she had been terrified of for years was pressed up against her, staring her down, and her body reacted in ways she didn’t expect, didn’t want. She couldn’t help but notice how he smelled... dark... like a malevolent spirit that had risen from a woodsy forest floor to consume her whole. She blinked rapidly at the realization that yet another question was hanging in the air as she stared at his soft mouth, a deceptively plush contrast to the anger in his face.

She’d kept pushing the situation to the back of her mind, refusing to think through what exactly happened between her and Hux. Everything, both the rise and the fall, was so fast and so unexpected. Kylo’s aggressive questioning had made her face what she didn’t want to- at least not yet.

Ichara looked away, eyes downcast. “I thought he was something he wasn’t.” her voice was barely a whisper.

“He’s weak.” the last syllable sharp on his tongue. “But I’m not... You’re not.” his voice dropped to a hushed baritone that she could feel in her chest.

Her eyes flitted back up to his nervously, irises managing to catching the low light. They glittered like gold around widening pupils. “I was lonely, I suppose.”

“We don’t have to be, not anymore.”

The trance almost broke- suddenly Kylo made sense, but right now she didn’t care about his motives or her own for that matter. Liquor certainly couldn’t take the blame- the danger and the darkness of the creature holding her down struck a chord in the depths of her. Heat pooled in her stomach and lust raised its wicked head from its waters. She wanted to taste the bite of the predator.
Kylo brought his face down to hers, ever so slow with trepidation. He held her gaze as long as he could before kissing her gently. His heat consumed her like a match dropped to veins thick with gasoline. His mouth was so soft that it hurt, and she held back a moan as he delicately kissed her deeper. Her hand shook as she raised it, brushing fingertips against his neck- *I can’t...* she lamented, as he pulled her closer at the sensation.

He moved to kiss down her jaw, grazing the porcelain skin of her neck with his teeth. She ran her fingers through his silken hair, dazed at the surreal situation she found herself in. A gasp escaped her lips at the sudden, sharp pain as he sucked a mark over the heartbeat in her neck. In response she rolled her hips into the growing bulge beneath his tunic and a low moan reverberated in his chest that she felt more than heard.

He picked her up effortlessly, and she wrapped her legs around him as he carried her to the bedroom. He lowered her to the bed, looming over her like a shadow- the only light in the room provided by the stars. She pulled at the clasp on his tunic and he stood, quickly undressing, but leaving his arm gauntlets on as if to preserve some sense of mystery. She slipped out of what little she had on and lay back, admiring his body; the both of them were marked with scars like a canvas of war. He was everything Hux wasn’t- he was soft and scarred where Hux was sharp and smooth.

“How can you *still* think about him” he growled, crawling on top of her.

“Get out of my head.”

He lunged forward, lips brushing her ear, “I’m going to be so deep in you that won’t be able to even *look* at him without thinking of me” he rumbled before moving to brush his lips along her collar bone. He propped himself up with one arm while a calloused hand drifted over her, squeezing her breast as his tongue lightly sucked and teased at a nipple. She moaned and arched into his hand, and his lips trailed back upwards, kissing again at the darkening mark on her neck.

She could feel the tip of him teasing at her entrance, and spread her legs wider for him. His heartbeat quickened; and unable to wait any longer, he lowered himself on top of her, pushing in slowly. She gasped- just like everything else about him, he was massive.

“I don’t want to hurt you” he whispered.

“Don’t worry about me” she murmured before pulling his lips down to hers. He paced himself as he dipped into her, slowly pushing deeper and deeper with every push. She whined into his mouth at the sharp sensation as he finally pushed all the way in, seated deeply inside her. His pace quickened and she dug her nails into his back, pulling him to her with every thrust.

She wrapped her legs around him as they moved, and he buried his face into her shoulder, sliding an arm beneath her to hold her to him. The force buzzed around them and she could feel herself pulled into his building orgasm, crashing into her like a wave. She cursed and ground her teeth as she came around him. A low moan escaped as his weight pressed her into the bed- he grunted with a few sharp, forceful thrusts, crushing her to him as he came into her.

A young woman flashed across his mind… and she could see it. *Scavenger.*

And indeed, just like a wave, the orgasm pulled her core away as it receded, hollowing her out like an abandoned shell.
She felt emptiness.

She felt nothing.

Kylo stayed for a moment, collapsed, panting into her ear. His right arm was still underneath, wrapped around her waist; he reached up with the other hand to cup her face, brushing his thumb across her cheek. He raised his head, eyes searching her expression—his face fell at the realization that she… saw. He hadn’t even meant to, it just happened.

Her eyes glinted with malice in the starlight as she stared back at him.

“I’m not your scavenger, I can’t save you from your loneliness.” her voice was smooth and venomous “Get out.”

He blinked, and his mouth moved as if to say something, but instead he quickly got up and started getting dressed. She pushed herself up and stared daggers at him.

His voice was thick and raspy as he stuttered to apologize “I… I’m sorry, It's not, I—”

“How. Out.”

He left as if he’d seen a ghost, face grey and ashen.

She fell backwards and sighed, staring up at the ceiling. Not only had she learned just how acute his weakness was for the desert girl, she was actually grateful that Kylo had made it easier to hate him. Part of her was starting to empathize with him, and the way she absolutely melted under his touch surprised even her.

Losing everything to a case of force-sensitive Stockholm is unacceptable.

What started off as an indulgence to spite Hux only made her miss him more. She reached under her bed and pulled out his crop she stole from Canto Bight. She ran the leather tip across her lips and shivered.

“That horrid man has ruined me.” she lamented to the ceiling.

Phasma pulled up a stool beside Hux in the almost empty cantina. He essentially never came down there, and most of the officers left in fear when he stalked in. Even out of uniform, he still looked overly polished in a black button up shirt and slacks.

“I was going to talk to her but Kylo Ren headed me off. I’ll do it in the morning.”

Hux sighed. “Today has been so horrible, I’m afraid to sleep and wake up to an even worse day tomorrow. I suppose I should be used to it by now.”

She raised an eyebrow. “How long have you been down here?”

“Ehh, an hour or so. I was mulling over what you said earlier, and I need to amend an err on my
He waved the bartender over. “Another gin & tonic sir?”

“No, no, I was wondering if you knew who was tending bar last night.”

A smile crept across Phasma’s face as the bartender’s face fell.

“I was sir” he squeaked.

“I beg y’pardon?”

“I was sir. P-Peavey told me to leave so I did.”

He looked over at Phasma with a tight lipped grin. “I hope this makes it up to you, but keep it quiet. I still have a headache.”

She strolled behind the bar and shoved him to the floor. The few remaining officers either bold enough or drunk enough to have stayed now got up and left. “You heard the General. Be silent.” she ordered.

“I had no choice! I-”

“There’s always a choice- you just made the wrong one.” She put a boot on his chest and snatched a towel off the bar, stuffing it in his mouth. Hux sipped his drink to the melody of muffled cries and fleshy pops. After a few seconds of silence, she stood up, wiping her hands on her black combat pants. Even off the clock she was dressed to kill. Literally. She poured herself two fingers of scotch and topped up the General’s drink before rejoining him.

“Thank you sir, that was very considerate of you.”

They drank in silence for some time.

“I need to get back and shower. Mara gets off her shift in an hour and she hates when I smell like blood.”

Hux nodded. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“You like her company? The Mercenary?”

“Yes. I do.”

She put a hand on his shoulder “Hmm. Goodnight, Armitage.”

Standing in front of her doors sobered him up- he didn’t know how to even start apologizing… so he didn’t.

Instead, he went back to his room to pass out in his bed, hoping the lull of the alcohol might give him some semblance of restful sleep.
Comments and kind criticisms loved and appreciated <3
Salt in the Scrape

Chapter Summary

Very graphic, CW for blood & sexual violence.

Ichara has a horrible morning, and runs into the two men she so desperately just wants to avoid right now.

Also Phasma is over Kylo's skulking

I hope you guys like it, I'm not the best at smut and I spent forever trying to relay the scene in my head :P

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kylo was awake long before his alarm went off, agonizing at how his actions last night were a mistake on many different fronts. He didn’t even have to try to turn her away from Hux- the hateful man had already done that himself. Everything seemed to be falling into place but just before it came to fruition it fell apart instead. He forced himself out of bed and wandered to his library, pulling a random book from the shelf and collapsing into a chair. The smell of her perfume lingered on his gauntlets, and it wafted to him with every page turn. It made his heart drop to his stomach out of embarrassment.

He hadn’t intended for the turn of events last night to happen at all, but something about the thought of Hux touching her stoked a fire in his chest; the thought of him pushing a force user to their knees made his face twitch with anger. That man was back-biting snake, and he deserved nothing in Kylo’s eyes. He didn’t particularly care for her either, though. She was just as shifty and underhanded. There was something off about her he just couldn't place.

*Perhaps that’s why they got along so well.*

- 

He wasn’t alone in having a horrible morning. Not that she felt guilty- this was *all* Hux’s fault as far as she was concerned- but she couldn’t bring herself to look at him. She rolled over in bed and typed up a quick message.

- “Still ill. Notify me should anything come up. My deepest apologizes, General.”

- 

While she was thinking about it, she had a bone to pick with her cousin.

- I confronted my fears; the worst happened. Thanks for that.
I am no longer in need of your services.
You failed me.
Consider any plans you had null- you’ll have to get it on your own.
Even if I wanted to help it’s not happening, trust me.
(because you can actually trust me)
-Chara
-

It was probably more hateful than she deserved, but Ichara didn’t have the energy to care about anyone else’s feelings right now. She pulled the covers over her head and savored every second she felt that she could hide from the world. Like every other thing she enjoyed in life, however, it was cut short. Three rapid fire buzzes on her holopad kept rousing her from any attempt at further sleep.
-
If you’ve fallen victim to some insidious disease I suggest you go to the medbay for treatment or leave the ship and spare us all.
-
I do hope your condition improves soon.
-
I would very much like to speak with you when you have a moment. Preferably today, around 21:00.
-

The difference between the first and the other two messages was that he read the angry words she’d sent to her cousin. Unable to handle the burning paranoia whispering across his thoughts and eating away at his sleep, Hux had decided to outright admit to bugging her holopad and demanding answers.

She could picture the look of irritation on his face as he typed those out, and hated that it brought a smile to her face. Only Hux would assign a time for someone to “have a moment”. A twinge in her heart told her she missed him. A realization which, in turn, just served to make her even more angry at him. Giving up on sleep, she got dressed and made her way to the training room for a more destructively physical release.
-
Phasma was enduring her own battle with paranoia, as when she arrived at Ichara’s doors to talk with her, Kylo Ren came around the corner. She didn’t even pause, and just kept marching down the corridor, nodding her head in acknowledgement.

“Sir.”

He made a point to stare after her, suspicious as to why she’d be on this hall yet again. She told herself if he was there next time she tried to do this favor it was a sign from the stars that she was to strike him down… half joking and half serious.

Kylo sighed, staring at her door, biting the inside of his cheek. After standing there for a minute, trying to decide what he was going to say, he stormed to the training room. He hesitated when the doors opened to reveal Ichara practicing blaster volleys against three droids. She hadn’t noticed him, and he walked over to the control panel to turn off the program.

“I need to talk to you.”

Already irked from the morning, she stomped over to the panel. “You really don’t.” She reached
down to recommence the program and he grabbed her hand, stopping her.

“About last night…”

“Why the scavenger?” she blurted out “Do you have feelings for that desert girl?”

He yanked her to him “Say that again and those words will be your last.” He released her roughly and she rubbed her wrist, scowling.

“You weren’t the one horribly insulted last night! You don’t get to treat me like that!”

“Nothing I could do would be more insulting than what you’ve already done to yourself.” he retorted.

“What is your fixation on him? Stars know this has nothing to do with me.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about. Come, let’s try your hand in combat. Perhaps I’m wrong, and you’ll be more impressive than the hangar.”

As soon as he entered the practice floor behind her she whirled around and ignited her saber in one smooth motion. He stumbled as he went to block her attack, but quickly recovered. She swirled and struck aggressively, staying low to the ground- frustrating to someone of his height. He held his own, primarily defensive at first.

The aggressive maneuvering and flitting required a lot of effort, and as he predicted, she soon tired. He came in with heavy swings, almost cutting her as she stumbled during a particularly low deflection. There was an undercurrent of tension as they fought, and each weren’t entirely sure the other wasn’t secretly attempting to cut their partner down. Panting, sweat clinging hair to her forehead, she raised her hands in defeat.

“The Ataru form. It’s quite effective when your opponent isn’t also strong with the force, as I’m sure you now know.” he said condescendingly. “Who taught you?”

“I did. Force users were in low supply where I came from.”

“And where is that?”

“Irrelevant.” she shot back

“I’m tired of your vague answers. You’ve had your chance.”

He narrowed his eyes and clawed his hand out toward her, splitting into her mind. She did her best to push back, but under the strength of his power she knew it would be impossible to hold him off forever.

*I’ll give him exactly what he wants, then.*

Struggling to move whilst simultaneously keeping him at bay, she gritted her teeth, stepping close enough to reach him and grasp his outstretched hand. Suddenly he was in the fire- he could feel her fear, the pain exploding like fireworks at the edges of his vision. The smell of burnt flesh filled his nostrils, screams echoed around him. He looked up through her eyes, and a golden droid hand appeared from the smoke to pull her from the burning rubble.
It was so... familiar.

He watched her run from an arms dealer’s tent with a pair of stolen sabers, collapsing the building on him as she left. In the darkness of a cave, she activated the blades. The crystal inside squeaking and tinkling as it fractured, bleeding the blades from blue to a crimson hue.

Her cousin, much younger then, sent her out to dispatch some urchins pickpocketing on her block. “I didn’t expect you return so quickly, much less at all. Perhaps I’ll have use for you yet”.

More and more images flitted by rapidly- smuggling with a twi’lek who eventually turned on her, torturing on Bakura, contract killing, the thread of loneliness and hate tied them all together with a repetitive whisper echoing as flew past. “The killer, the general, and her fleet”

She yanked her hand away, tears streaming down her face from both the emotion and the effort. He stood in silence, overwhelmed and surprised at everything she had just shown him.

“I hope that answers your questions, now kriiffing leave me alone.” She all but ran from the training room, resolute to see him as little as possible till it came time to strike him down. Upon returning to her quarters she poured a drink and snatched up the book, falling onto the couch with a graceless thud. Today was clearly going to be horrible, and she’d resigned herself to hiding from it the best she could.

Yet again, anything she wanted didn’t seem to last- in the evening came an interruption of her peace and quiet.

Hux forced himself to punch his code in the door and closed his eyes as he stepped into her quarters. She looked up from her book, unmoving.

“Do you want to know a secret, Hux? This book is cursed. Every time I start reading it, someone I don’t want to see shows up.”

So she’s still at it. “You’re quite ungrateful to someone who saved your life the other night.” he snapped.

“Is that how you see it? Oh Hux…” she laughed “Who do you think you are?” - mimicking the insult he’d levied at her the other day. “No, no wait, don’t tell me.” She jumped up and sidled over to her counter to pour from what little whiskey was left “You’re General of the First Order, and you can replace me whenever you wish. Why don’t you go ahead and do that then and leave me alone, sir.” she finished the statement with a sarcastic bow.

“I’ve been trying to explain myself to you but you’ve been naught but a horrid bitch to me.”

“Do you really think anything you said to me would be justifiable with an explanation?”

“Yes.” he said, matter-of-factly.

She cringed as she finished her drink in one huge gulp and exhaled sharply, “You are such an ass!” She threw the glass at him as hard as she could and it barely missed his head, shattering on the wall behind him.
“This is why nobody likes being around Force users, you’re all unhinged!” he shouted at her. “I’m trying to, damn it, I’m trying to fix this.”

“Oh that’s rich, ‘Let me explain why calling you worthless trash was acceptable.’ By the force, you’re both useless. Kylo can’t fuck right and you can’t apologize right. The leaders of the mighty First Order are worthless.” she sneered, purposely treading into dangerous territory. Between the nudge of alcohol and the complete, utter exasperation she felt, all caution had been thrown to the wind. “There’s more salt in the gutter I came from.” She grumbled, pouring another drink in the remaining glass on the countertop.

Every muscle in his body tensed, and he clenched his fists as he spoke; voice low and strained, “What. Did. You. Just. Say?”

“Which part, because I said a lot, though not as much as you had to say the other day.”

The look of pure hatred on his face would have brought any of his officers to their knees. He walked over to her one step at a time, forcing each word slowly through clenched teeth. “I... distinctly recall... you... implying... that you... fucked... Kylo Ren.”

She closed her eyes and breathed deeply. “Hmm. You smell like tea and soap. He smells so different, must be the outfit.” she polished off her drink again, and sucked her teeth at the firey taste on her tongue. He gently removed the glass from her hand, and set it down on the counter, heartbeat pounding like thunder in his ears.

“You fucking bitch!” he screamed. The distant rage rushed into him like a flood. Before she could recoil he grabbed her by the jaw and whipped her face back up, “How could you?”

“What do you care, I’m replaceable, remember?!” she yelled, shoving him and following close as he stepped back ‘I suppose the ‘whorehouse’ you found me in rubbed off on me!” she pushed him again and he stumbled backward to the floor, yelping in pain at the broken glass stabbing into his palms when he fell. She straddled him and pushed him down onto his back, shards crunching beneath him.

“And so I let Kylo climb on top of me and fuck me like he wishes he could fuck that scavenger girl.” she growled. Somewhere distant she didn’t want any of this to have happened, but right now she wanted him to feel the pain she felt, and strove to cut him as deep as she could. He pushed her out of his face, the glass embedded in his gloves scraping her cheek.

He leapt to his feet, peeling off his bloody gloves, pain not even registering in his fury, and kicked her back to the ground as she tried to stand.

“You are going to pay for what you have done to me!” he shouted, bloodied hand removing his belt, and she cried out as it landed with a crack across her back.

“To YOU?” she cackled. “What, you just want me to suffer? Fine. Here’s your suffering.” she bodied another swing with a hiss as she made it to her feet. She took a shard of glass and sliced down her palm, yanked him to her by his collar, and ground her bloodied palm into his face “Here’s your fucking suffering. You hurt my fucking feelings you asshole!” The last sentence came out...
sounding more distraught than she had intended it to.

He grabbed her wrist and nuzzled into the bloody offering, her crimson running across pink lips as his hateful gazed burned into her. “I didn’t think creatures like you had feelings”

She yanked her hand away “Oh I wish I didn’t- instead I made the mistake of having feelings for someone who cares for nothing but himself.”

“No, I cared about you and then you let that psychopath put his dick in you! You don’t have the right to be angry at me for anything!”

“Cared? In what kind of fucked dimension do you exist in that you say those things to someone you ‘care’ about. Tell me, do you fuck all the ‘hired help’?” her voice climbing as she screamed at him.

He looked disgusted, taken aback by the bluntness of her question “No! Is that really the kind of person you think I am!”?

“You want to know what kind of person I think you are? I think you’re a hateful prick!” she snatched his ruined collar with her bloody hand, buttons popping from the force as she yanked him inches from her face “And I think you’re pathetic” she whispered.

Her words echoed Kylo’s and it flipped a switch inside him.

“Oh… I’ll show you pathetic, beast.” he snatched her arm and drug her to the bedroom so fast that she couldn’t catch her footing, then slung her on the bed. He unbuttoned his shirt, chest heaving, looking like a man possessed with his bloodied face and usually perfect hair fallen in his eyes.

She thought he was gorgeous.

“Take those off.” he ordered.

She laughed, “No, you don’t get to order me around anymore.”

He lunged at her, grabbing her throat with a bloody hand and pinning her to the bed. “I am General Hux of the First Order and I do whatever I damn well please. You will take them off, beast.” he released her gruffly and finished undressing.

She curled her lip, but slipped out of her clothes and walked over to him, a twinge of sadness prickling at the realization she’d never seen this much of him. She ran her hand down his chest, over the silver dog tags that hung around his neck, streaking him with blood as if he were being anointed.

“If it makes you feel any better, I wished he was you.” she said, only, half taunting him. He snarled and pushed her back onto the bed. Just when he thought he couldn’t get angrier, he saw his crop on her side table.

He snatched it up and his voice jumped an octave “Did you let him use this?!”

She furrowed her brow, as if that was somehow the most insulting thing he’d said all night “Absolutely not- I had that out because I missed… you.” She started the sentence before realizing what she was saying, and her words drifted off into a mumble.

He ground his teeth at her admission, but refused to acknowledge it. He looked away and pointed
with the crop “Against the wall.” She slunk over to face the wall, hands held together, raised above her head.

*Just like Canto Bight. The worst mistake of my damned life.* He lamented.

Every word that left his mouth next was accentuated with a calculated strike. “You. betrayed. me. you. absolute. bitch.” he attempted to fix his hair and catch a breath for a second before spinning her around “I want you to look at me.” He gently opened her mouth and placed the crop between her teeth, pushing her jaw shut with a trembling finger. “You will be silent.”

He slipped a hand between her legs and growled at the slickness. He dipped into her for a moment, fingers stroking her in small, perfect circles- her breaths started to get faster and shallower, and her legs started to shake. He reached up with his other hand running a ghost of fingertips across her before stopping at her throat.

“Look at me.” he commanded, eyes glowing sistine blue as he stared at her with disdain. She struggled to keep fluttering lashes open, and at the first moan she let slip he pulled his hand away and yanked the crop from her mouth. “Is this you or our beloved supreme leader?” he hissed, shoving the two fingers into her mouth. She returned his icy stare, and sucked hard before releasing them with a juicy pop.

“Do you really want to know?” she taunted him.

He growled in anger through bared teeth “You're going to regret that. Get on the bed.”

He was on her in a flash, pinning her wrists to the bed as he kissed her, both their lips sticky with blood, drawing more as he nipped her lip with a canine. He nudged her legs apart and reached down to position himself; making a point to enter her slowly, a wicked smile crossing his face as she moaned in frustration.

“I hate myself for even touching you.” he growled.

“I know.” her voice was soft and breathy before crying out as he thrust into her “Oh I missed you” she breathed, barely audible. She wove her fingers into the chain of his dog tags and pulled his face to hers before he could respond, all tongue and teeth as she kissed him savagely. The chain broke in her hands as he pulled back to scowl down at her.

“You don’t get to say that” He was hateful as he took her; already sensitive from his ministrations earlier, it didn’t take long for her to peak underneath him. She tried to pull him into her but he took one hand to hold her down by her throat as she came.

“No, beast.” She dug her nails into his biceps, a shuddering cry escaping as he pinned her down and fucked into her relentlessly. He could almost hear her whispers creeping into his head but he pushed them away. It would be too much, he didn't want to let her words twist him anymore.

Again she noted he was everything Kylo wasn’t. To be so dark without the nuance of the force didn’t make him weak or lesser… no… He was a consumptive well of desire so empty and depraved she swore even the darkness of the force recoiled from him- and it made her sick with want.

To his surprise, she moved like a coiled spring, rolling on top of him. She straightened her back, holding his hands down with a flick of her wrist. She knew how much he hated the force, and he pulled angrily at the invisible restraints. He admired how her breasts bounced with every swivel of
her hips; the blood streaked across her form appearing black in the starlight. Everything was
gray-scale save her golden eyes staring down at him, surveying the furious man beneath her. A small
smile pricked at the corner of his mouth, and her momentary distraction caused her to release his
wrists.

He flipped her back over “How dare you.” he hated to admit that the force restraints stoked
something inside him, and he was already shuddering to hold back his release. He fell on top of her
and reached a hand under each shoulder, forcing her into him as he rutted into her. She yelped like a
wounded animal as he adjusted himself to push even deeper, the over stimulation both pleasure and
agony.

_Hux... oh fuck... Hux.... stars... ah... Hux... Hux..._ She didn’t want to stop saying his name, a
reminder with every syllable that he was the one inside her, driving her to the edge.

To hear his name moaned so desperately, so pitifully, broke the dam of his resolve. He bit her
shoulder, _hard_; he didn’t want to give her any satisfaction from what he might say in the passion of
the moment.

With one forceful stroke he bottomed out against her cervix, and she cried out at the sudden pain
washing over her in tandem with her orgasm. He buried his face into her neck and let out a strangled
cry as he came into her, she could feel his cock twitch with every spurt of warmth he shot into her. A
soft moan escaped with every exhale as she came down.

The words he kept inside drowned out her buzzing voice in his head.

They were too perfect- covered in blood and sweat as they lay tangled together in the starlight.

“Ichara...” he whispered. He squeezed his eyes shut and sighed, breath tickling her neck as he found
himself unable to finish his sentence. He rolled off of her onto his back, and they stared at the ceiling.
She reached out and took his hand as they caught their breath.

Neither knew how long they laid there together, wishing time would stand still. The blood and sweat
dried, and finally she rose to go shower. She paused in the doorway, looking back at the man laid
across her bed, copper hair the only color glimmering in the low light.

“All of this is your fault.” she whispered, before disappearing into the next room. She closed her eyes
as the water ran down, washing the remnants of _them_ down the drain. She was hoping he’d stayed,
but he was gone when she stepped out.

Hux had considered joining her, but the dread of what he’d done was creeping up on him. _She was
right_. He dressed in a daze, slowly buttoning whatever buttons remained on his shirt, and left. At the
sight of him, a patrol rushed up to stop him in the corridor.

“Sir! We’ll get you to the medbay! What happened?” Perfectly coiffed hair disheveled, dried blood
streaked across his face, and a torn collar made the usually impeccable man look like an absolute
disaster.

He held up his hand to stop them. “That will not be necessary. I assure you, nothing in the medbay
can fix what’s wrong with me.” with that he pushed past them and disappeared into his quarters.
(sorry, I love the idea of silly storm troopers being ship bros) 
----
The troopers shrugged and continued on their rounds. “I told, you man, they’re both 
crazy.”

“Do you think that was him, like, torturing her earlier?”

“If it was, it sounded like she liked it, I’m just saying.”

He elbowed his partner “Duuuuude, gross. Should we check on her?”

The other trooper stopped in his tracks. “You are not serious, man.”

“Okay okay, but if it turns out something bad happened you owe me drinks next 
rotation we have off.”

“Deal. And if she’s fine then you owe me.”

“You really think they’re both that messed up?”

The other trooper snorted in his helmet. “Absolutely.”

*Fun lore fact- The children on Canto Bight aren't slaves, they're mostly made up of 
orphans, which are a problem in any large & immoral city in the SW ‘verse it seems. So 
yeah, after the destruction of the academy, the Baroness had a young teenage Ichara go 
out a kill a bunch of kids on her block to earn her keep instead of taking care of her 
cousin. Ruxinn is a shitty person and she'll get her own in the end ;) Promise
Phasma had set her alarm to get up earlier than usual, and her mind instantly flooded with dread upon waking. She wanted to get this favor for Hux out of the way not just to get it over with, but because she was genuinely concerned for him. The anxiety he was wallowing in over this ‘relationship’ (she rolled her eyes at the thought) with the mercenary had to stop. It wasn’t anything official, but Hux saying he even so much as enjoyed anyone’s company without being sarcastic was tantamount to a declaration of love on the spot.

She could appreciate Ichara’s lack of squeamishness when it came to physical altercations, and felt she was actually capable of keeping the General safe; however, she wasn’t entirely sure that the General was safe from her. Kylo Ren’s sudden interest in the woman aroused suspicion. Although Hux was fond of her, Phasma wouldn’t hesitate to kick her out of an airlock.

Her girlfriend rolled over in the bed they shared as the alarm kept beeping. “It’s so early, babe, I thought inspections weren’t for two more days.” she mumbled sleepily.

“I have to fix something for Hux. He pissed off his girlfriend being himself... which is understandable.” Phasma grumbled as she threw the covers back and started getting dressed.

Mara rolled up onto her elbows, smirking through the haze of sleep. A wavy waterfall of auburn hair spilled over her shoulders, and hazel eyes sparkled over freckled cheeks. She was like the soft breeze of a gentle summer- something not found on Pernassos, Phasma’s home planet. She was rare and sweet, and the only thing Phasma enjoyed other than her job.

“You know I can’t speak on any of that. It’s... ugh. I don’t know that he even knows what it is. He’s being a complete ass about the whole situation. Kylo Ren has interfered the past two days and I need to get this over with before it escalates. I really don't get paid enough.”

“Unfortunately he’s a necessary one- apparently the only reason he’s still alive is to keep the financial backing from someone in the Outer Rim.”

Mara wiggled out from under the covers and hopped to her feet, running over to her grumpy, shiny
girlfriend. “Ah-ah, no helmet yet.” She stood up on her tip toes and kissed her, wrapping her arms around her neck. Phasma picked her up as if she were weightless and carried her back over to the bed.

“Sorry to get you up so early, Mar, but at least Hux is going to owe me a huge favor after it’s all done.” she threw her on the bed and Mara laughed as she bounced onto the covers. Her relentlessly cheery attitude would be insufferable from anyone else but on her, Phasma found it endearing.

“Well, I’m going back to sleep. Don’t kill anyone if you don’t have to!” she called after her.

Phasma sighed as her helmet hissed into place. She was hoping it wouldn’t come to that, but there would be no hesitation should the situation turn.

Ichara was rubbing the sleep from her eyes as she answered the comm at her door. When it opened to reveal Phasma she assumed the worst and her heart jumped in her throat. “Is everything alright? What happened?”

She stepped through the doors, leaving her mask on as she addressed the issue at hand “I’m going to be brief and to the point. I lied to you in the hangar. Hux is my General, but also my friend. I’ve been suspicious of you since the day he brought you aboard. After finding a vial of extremely potent sedative in your cargo I brought it to his attention, and unfortunately, he assumed you were going to kill him with it.”

She wanted to be angry at Phasma, but the last sentence caught her off guard. “He, sorry, what?? How in the hell did he come to that conclusion?”

“As General of the First Order, he has had multiple attempts on his life. It will come as no surprise to you that he has… handled… a lot of people to get to his position. It’s not just the Resistance that wants to take his life, many more trying to move up the ranks have attempted that as well.”

Stars… that ruthlessness is just something else to love about the man. Oh stop it! What is wrong with you? She cursed herself for how deep he had sunk his claws into her.

“Your force abilities help you to find these traitors better than I can; because of this, it is in my interest that you stay here. I also hate seeing him like this- frankly, he’s too neurotic to know how to apologize like a regular human being.”

“That may well be the case, but he’s made it blatantly apparent he doesn’t want to apologize, nor does want me here. I’ll be leaving in a few days and then we can both have peace.”

She sighed. “The man is a high-strung mess, Ichara. I hope that by understanding why he is this way you can at least forgive him enough for him to function. He’s on the verge of a heart attack and it’s interfering with my work.”

“Alright, I’ll speak with him.” she grinned and shook her head, “If I really wanted to kill him I wouldn’t have to be so underhanded, you know. I’m almost offended.”

Phasma said nothing and just stared at her.

“I mean, I don’t want to, of course! I thought that could go without saying. Trust me, if I had my pick it would be Kylo Ren.” she followed with an awkward laugh, unsure in her still groggy state if
threatening the Supreme Leader to a captain was really a good way to start the day.

Phasma almost smiled under her helmet in appreciation of the sentiment. “Agreed. I appreciate you speaking with him.” With that, she left.

The more Ichara thought about everything, though, the angrier she got. Years of being alone made her unused to scrutiny and having to work well with others. It was frustrating to constantly have people looking over her shoulder, and absolutely ridiculous that Hux would suspect something like that from her.

Again, the General was in his office early. He wasn’t expecting to see her and jumped slightly when she strolled through the doors, stopping at the edge of his desk.

“Let me see your hands”

“No.” His palms were littered with tiny cuts from the night before, and he had been making a point to press his fingertips to the wounds every time she crossed his mind, as if the stinging would teach him a lesson.

“It wasn’t a question.” Even through her vocoder he could tell her voice was strangely non-combative. He hadn’t known what to expect and the dread had been twisting in his chest like a serpent since he’d risen.

He glared up at her, unmoving.

She sighed, and held her hands out- he clenched his hands into fists at the strange tingling sensation, noting that the stinging pain from earlier was gone. “That was all I wanted,” she said somberly, drifting around the desk to stare out at the stars.

He was uncomfortable with her lurking but did his best to pay her no attention. He had decided any emotions unattached to work needed to be killed off. His life was dedicated to the First Order, to ruling the galaxy, and she was a distraction in a way he had never dealt with before.

Interfering with my work holds back the First Order. It’s tantamount to treason. He kept repeating over and over, wanting desperately to believe it.

A few minutes passed before she broke the silence. “Is it true what Phasma said? You thought I was going to kill you?”

“Yes.”

She snorted derisively but swallowed back the cutting retort on the tip of her tongue. She wanted to keep calm. As frustrated as she was with him, she found herself wanting to fix the rift between them.

“You do realize that if I had wanted to kill you, you’d be dead already.”

“Yes.” He took an intentionally disinterested tone in his responses.

“So what brought you to such a brilliant conclusion?” The mono-syllabic answers were getting under her skin and it was becoming a concerted effort to not lash out.

“You and your cousin are plotting something.” He poked at his holopad, only pretending to work as
he was completely unable to focus.

She froze, wondering what exactly her cousin had told him. Had she been trying to play both sides of the field? Did she go over Ichara’s head because she was impatient? Was she *that* angry with her? She felt guilty for jumping down her cousin’s throat over something that turned out to not be her fault, but didn’t expect her to flip so suddenly.

“And what makes you think this?” Afraid to be caught in a lie, she avoided outright denying it.

“Messages.”

“From who??” Ichara irritationally tapped a finger on her armor, telling herself she would drag every sentence out of Ruxinn herself next time she saw her.

“You.”

“Excuse me?” she spun on her heel, Hux still staring down at his work.

“Surveillance.”

She bit her lip so hard she tasted blood. Adrenaline spiked and she involuntarily twitched underneath her mask, physically swallowing the rage back. It was a rookie mistake to have messages intercepted- as secretive as she had tried to be in the content sent out, her cousin wasn’t exactly as covert.

“My cousin wishes to be Canto Bight’s representative in the Cantonica senate, and she feels the backing of the First Order would help her. She wanted to meet Kylo Ren, which we can both agree is laughable, hence the reason I never brought it up.” her good-will was cracking, and venom laced the last few words of her sentence.

“I see.”

Hux agreed it was an absurd plan- Kylo was little more than a volatile monster with zero interest or experience in politics. Someone wanting anything from him in that area was a fool. Besides, anyone with even the slightest knowledge knew that he was “Supreme Leader” in title only- the General was the one that truly ran the operations. He quickly pushed down the wisp of regret rising in his mind, telling him that this entire mess was truly over nothing.

Every curt response simply made her angrier. She wanted to snatch him up and pull words from his throat. “So you managed to bug my holopad... and in reading things you didn’t understand... you invented an elaborate conspiracy.” she said indignantly

“Yes.” he muttered through clenched teeth, his own front beginning to slip under the tension in the room.

She very slowly walked back to the front of his desk as she removed her holopad from its holster. He still refused to look up at her and she snapped, pulling her arm back in a dramatic arc and smashing the holopad on the edge of his desk, sending shards of glass and bits of tech flying everywhere.

“This should ease your mind.” she spat, tossing the bent case into the way of whatever work he was so fixated on, sure *that* would get a reaction from him.
Without looking up he nonchalantly brushed it to the side. “I would very much like for you to leave.”

Trembling with rage, she fought the urge to fling him across the room. After a deep, shaky breath, her voice came out low and sharp.

“I came here to fix this- I will *not* make that mistake again. You're no longer my client- you're fired. The next time I have to deal with you I'll be dead and in hell.” She flew out of his office, trying to talk herself down from what the fury inside wanted to do.

-

Kylo had been practicing for about an hour when she burst into the room like a whirlwind, storming over to one of the benches lining the wall. He spun around, surprised at her presence. He was used to being alone in the mornings, and suddenly felt somewhat sheepish, dressed in only his work out pants. Given their strange altercation the day before he wasn’t entirely sure how to react. She yanked her helmet off and carelessly tossed it to the ground before unbuckling her outer armor to reveal a tight-fitting under armor tank-top underneath. She put her face in her hands for a moment, releasing a dramatic sigh before slowly turning to the room behind her. So lost in her own mind, she hadn’t even noticed he was there till she turned around.

“Supreme Leader… Can we spar… please?” she was actually relieved at his presence.

He raised an eyebrow at the desperation in her voice. Frustration swirled thick around her and it piqued his curiosity. “If you wish.”

She’d abandoned her usual serpentine style of fighting and swung hard, grunting from exertion with every blow. Sparring like this was far more enjoyable for him, and without having to focus on dipping and dodging she lasted much longer. She was still no match for his strength or stamina; panting, she raised her hand in defeat. She’d pushed herself almost too far, and she found it difficult to catch her breath, stumbling backward till she found a wall to lean against.

“What happened?”

She looked up at him, still trying to catch her breath, unsure if there was any sincerity to the concern in his voice. “I’m terribly out of practice. I’ve never really had to fight a force user before.” He stood in silence for a moment as she recovered, finally pushing off the wall and brushing back the stray hair that had escaped into her face.

“That’s not what I was referring to.”

She straightened “I had a frustrating morning and needed a physical release for my anger. I am grateful for your time, Supreme Leader.”

He shook his head “You still didn’t answer me. What happened.”

“I…” she took a deep breath as she considered the best way to word her response “I relieved the General of my services due to irreconcilable differences... I will be returning to Canto Bight for a new assignment in a few days. My talents are a waste on someone so… unappreciative… of my abilities.”

Kylo looked away for a moment as if distracted, swallowing back a smug grin. “Ah, I see. I am confused as to how I am supposed to continue your training if you leave. I believe we have
established how lackluster your combat is.”

She was taken aback by his response. “I didn’t want to inconvenience you, Supreme Leader, but if you would have me stay-”

He cut her off “I would.”

Ichara smiled up at him “I would like that very much.”

He ushered her back to the ring and began critiquing her opening battle stance. She could have burst out laughing at the ridiculousness of the situation- if someone had told her as little as a month ago that she would be training under Kylo Ren she would have sliced them down the middle, yet here she was, with her arch nemesis perfecting her ability to kill him. They practiced until her arms shook from fatigue.

As they went to part ways, he put his hand on her shoulder. Alarms went off in the back of his mind, but he couldn’t help himself. “Ichara, wait.”

She turned to face him, slightly apprehensive “Yes, Supreme Leader?”

“When it’s just you and I, please, call me Kylo. And I meant what I said the other night… neither of us have to be alone, not anymore.” he cursed himself for pushing too hard again.

The first thought that crossed her mind was how she could use this to torture the General that scorned her; the second that maybe she was tired of being alone. She stepped towards him, placing her free hand on his chest. Staring back into his dark eyes, she whispered, “You were right, Kylo, no one else can possibly understand what it’s like to be what we are.” Part of her pained at genuinely finding truth in those words.

He pulled her up to him, sharing one long, passionate kiss before pulling away. “Your training begins tomorrow morning, I will see you here at the same time.”

“Yes, sir” she replied breathily, eyes lingering on his before turning to leave, pulling her helmet down over her face. She smirked as she made her way back to her quarters to shower and mull over the rather extreme change in plans that unfurled before her.

“You did what?”

“I admitted to bugging her pad and then I asked her to leave. She smashed it like a…” he couldn’t bring himself to call her a beast- in his own twisted way it was a term of endearment. He cleared his throat “Ahem, like an animal. You were correct, Phasma, this situation has put an undue amount of stress on me. I have dedicated my entire life to the First Order and I am not going to ruin it.”

“How is… oh stars, Armitage…” she sighed in aggravation “How is having a relationship with someone ruining your life? Hell, you were the most sane I’d ever seen you when you two were together, you absolute idiot. Sometimes I wonder how you got this far without any common damn sense.”

“Now as your General-”

She whipped around and shoved her index finger in his face “Armitage if you dare pull that rank
bullshit on me I will backhand your teeth to the outer rim.”

He pursed his lips in irritation, knowing full well it was a weak move, he just didn’t want to talk about it anymore.

“I'm tired of this topic. It is done. I'm considering it a learning experience and returning to what is actually important.”

She shook her head. “If you insist. Had I known this was going to be a complete waste of my time I could have slept in.”

“Yes, well, circumstances changed since our last conversation. It would seem Kylo Ren has taken a certain, ah…” the thought made bile rise in his throat and he couldn’t bring himself to actually put it into words; he swallowed it back mid sentence. “A certain interest in her, so it’s a moot point.”

Her mind flashed back to her brief conversation with Ichara earlier “Well considering she expressed the desire to murder him this morning I doubt it’s reciprocated.”

“Phasma, it is done.” he yelled, fist slamming down onto his desk in emphasis. Every bone in his body felt as if was about to snap, like the very air itself was pressing in around him.

She stared at him for a moment before responding- he could feel her gaze on him but refused to meet it. “Fine, be a stubborn bastard but don’t ask for my help with this again. You’re not off the hook, either, you still owe me” she grumbled as she returned the helmet to her head. “Mara and I are well past time for some shore leave, though I gotta say… Ichara is the only one I trust other than me to watch your ass.” she shrugged, before leaving him alone with his thoughts.

He put his elbows on his desk and clasped his hands, resting his forehead on them, eyes closed. One lone tear perched at the corner of his eye, threatening to mar his face with evidence of the sorrow growing in him. He quickly wiped it away, leaning back in his chair.

This is for the best, she was a mistake. You are above this. This is for the best.

Even the voice in his head faltered, knowing he didn’t believe any of it.

- 

She had gotten up every morning to train with Kylo Ren until she was physically unable to continue. Mercenary work required rigorous practice, and her time as a smuggler had forced her to be skilled or die- but this was unlike anything she had experienced before. It was as if he was training her to be a battle axe. She knew the undercurrent of distrust was still there, and suspected that’s why he had done nothing with her in the ways of the force. It was of no concern, though.

He might be stronger, but he’s not smarter than me, she mused as she spent her evenings memorizing every page of the book he’d leant her, practicing things on troopers when she knew she could get away with it. There were warnings about the dangers of Sith magic, though, and the deeper she got into the book, the longer it took for her to recover. It was something she decided to address later- trying to navigate her interactions with Kylo Ren was her top priority at the moment.

Every practice session ended with him kissing her goodbye- it was almost sweet. Perhaps after their first encounter he was still afraid to do anything more.
Afraid I might see the scavenger. Ever prideful, she was determined to snap the girl’s neck when she found her.

She stepped out of the ice-cold shower, groaning at the soreness lingering in her muscles. She had just slipped into her pajamas when there was a beep over the comm at her door. Hux and Kylo had never afforded her the courtesy of knocking before entering, and she’d noticed how irritatingly entitled they were to her space. Thinking it was Phasma or another trooper, she was still toweling her hair when the door opened to reveal a flushed General standing before her. She froze for a moment before tossing the towel off to the side.

“To what do I owe this grand pleasure, General?” she scowled.

Every morning he kept expecting her to walk back into his office, and every day his conscience wrestled with whether to apologize or continue ignoring her. He wanted to apologize, to ask her to stay, but kept repeating to himself that this was it - that he was done. That same internal voice had told him earlier he wasn’t even going to say goodbye at all, and it chastised him as he found himself pulled down the corridor towards her quarters. The internal struggle was still going on when the doors opened. Wet fronds of raven hair framed her face as she stared up at him. He swore her eyes were even brighter than he’d remembered, and rendered himself speechless for a moment.

“I understand you are returning to Canto Bight in the morning, I-I wanted to thank you for your service.” the sentence stumbled clumsily from his lips, and he fiddled with the seam of his glove.

“I am so glad to have been of service to you, General.” she said sarcastically. She found herself both confused and slightly concerned at the look of hurt on his face. “I distinctly remember you saying you would 'really like' it if I would leave, so I am going to.”

She cut him off as he opened his mouth to respond “Oh sorry, I meant was. I was going to go, but unfortunately, I must inform you my stay has been extended. I do apologize.”

He furrowed his brows in confusion and cursed the way his heart fluttered at the news. “S-Staying?”

“Indefinitely. Kylo Ren has taken me on as an apprentice, and he can’t very well train me on Canto Bight, can he?”

The fact she was staying for him was a punch in the gut, and in reaction he responded without thinking. “Taking you on as an apprentice... is that what they’re calling it now? So does he pay you or do you pay him?” he sneered.

No matter how angry he made her, she’d never used the force to hurt him. Kylo and Snoke used it abusively; grinding him down, and she swore to never be that cruel to him... to prove she was different from the others, but now it seemed nothing she did mattered. She glared at him before reaching out and throwing him against the wall, clawing her fingers to catch the air in his throat.

“I know how much you loathe people like me.” she snarled, voice rising to a crescendo “Well don’t worry, my dearest General, you reminded me that I don’t belong with people like you!”

She glowered at him as he clawed at the invisible force crushing his windpipe.

She held him for a moment more to stare up at him, a tear sliding down her cheek before releasing him; shaking her hand as if to physically remove the disdain she felt at her own actions. Looking down at the man on his knees, gasping for air, she slowly walked backwards through the open doors.
“I suppose I should thank you for that. Now leave me alone, General. I’m done suffering for you.”

She stumbled back as the doors closed. A choked sob caught in her chest—between the brutal training, the hell her emotions had been through, and the self-loathing at using the force against him, she was drained. She fell to her knees and picked up the damp towel, sobbing into it to muffle her anguish. She hadn’t cried like this in years; it was painful, as if the very core of her was being forced up through her throat.

*I feel so weak, but I’m not weak. I know I’m not. I just need rest. That’s all.*

Hux put his hand on the door and stared at the ground, still catching his breath. He could hear her muffled sobs and it twisted the knife of guilt in his heart.

*You’ve done enough damage. This is done. Ruined. Focus on what’s important. This is for the best, she was a mistake. You are above this. This is for the best.* He repeated his mantra as he drifted through the corridors, desperately grasping at the words as if they would save him from drowning in himself.

- 

Kylo noticed the zeal in her training the next day, but didn’t ask about it. Today was her intended departure date, and he had no doubt about who had something to do with her reborn fury. It still irked him that she found anything worth seeing in the man, but he reminded himself it was irrelevant now—he won. It was perfect timing for him to give her a specific gift this evening—one he was going to be sure to rub in the general’s face.

At the very end of their session, still sticky with sweat, he pushed her up against the target projector in one swift motion. He ground against her with his hips as he kissed her, and she moaned into his mouth at the friction. He pulled away, leaving his forehead against hers; both still short of breath from their training session.

“I will call on you tonight. I have something to give you.” he panted.

“I look forward to it.” She smiled, though a flicker of nervousness crept under her skin.

- 

Kylo retrieved a chest from the hangar and placed it on the table in his library, opening it to check the quality of the goods. Naboo was known for their detailed craftsmanship, and the shop he was referred to did not disappoint. *Perfect.*

He stopped what he was doing and put his hands behind his back, looking up to the ceiling. “I haven’t seen you in quite some time, scavenger.” he drawled.

“I don’t know why you insist on calling me that, you know my name”

He turned to face Rey, who had appeared a few feet behind him in his library. “I know your name, but I also know what you are. You call me a monster, and you’re right, because that’s what I am.” he picked up a glass of amber liquid and sipped from it before finishing his sentence. “I call you a scavenger, and I’m right, because that’s what you are. Tell me, why are you here? Come to try and scavenge me again?”

There was always some glimmer in him every time she was pulled away, but the eyes that stared into
her were cold, and she found the change in him frightful.

“I felt… well… I could feel something that was almost happiness across the force… which I thought was impossible since you get more and more horrible every time I see you. I suppose it’s because you’re drinking? Is that how you live with yourself?”

She would have considered the laughter that followed warm were it coming from anyone else.

“I’m actually celebrating, scavenger. The woman I’ve been training is free from her contract and will officially become my apprentice tonight. It’s quite the victory.” he stalked towards her. “She’s going to help me find you, and then perhaps there will be three monsters in the galaxy.”

“I will never turn, Ben!” she stomped as she clenched her fists by her side, absolutely furious with the man in front of her.

“How many times have I told you- Light, Dark, none of it matters. Besides, you won’t be turning from anything. You’ll be embracing who and what you are.” a sly grin slowly crept across his face before he took another sip. “I think you’re more angry at what’s inside you because you know I’m right.” his eyes narrowed as he finished his sentence.

She shook her head, still hoping to get through to him “I thought I could save you, Ben Solo. But every time I see you, there’s less and less of anyone worth saving.”

“Stop projecting yourself on me- I’m not the one that needs saving. Not anymore.”

“I don’t understand how-” he waved his hand to cut her off.

“I know you don’t understand, Rey- you never did. Just like the rest of them. Now... go away.”

She looked pained before disappearing. Something far away in him hurt at the expression on her face, but it was distant. If anything, this was actually pulling her closer into his clutches.

He finished his drink and left to go collect his apprentice. After his disgraceful loss on Starkiller and the death of Snoke, the First Order seemed to be losing their hold on a place in the force. By formally taking on an apprentice this would solidify his position as Supreme Leader, especially as most everyone thought force users were basically extinct or a myth. The sudden appearance of someone already fairly talented would make the galaxy wonder what other secrets he was hiding.

*Perhaps I should thank Hux for finding her,* he mused, relishing the other joy he would get in formalizing their arrangement.

The General was going to be absolutely livid, and there was nothing he could do about it.
A little shorter than my usual chapters. I spent too much time reworking it and finally decided to just post it. :P

Things become official, in more ways than one?

Half plot, half... not plot, lol

"Stay"

"Alright."

Afraid the “gift” could be imminent death, Ichara didn't dress down for the evening. She cleaned and prepped her light armor, checked the daggers hidden in each boot, and coiled her hair in a tight bun. In her distraction with the General, her endgame had fallen by the wayside. Mulling on it made her realize how overly comfortable she’d gotten in enemy territory. The abundant over-indulgences could have endangered both herself and the mission.

“It seems as if the paranoia is contagious” she mused, bitter at the thought of him.

She was putting the last touches on her makeup when the comm on her door went off. After a deep breath and steeling herself for whatever might come, she stepped through the doors. Instead of sending troopers to collect her as expected, though, Kylo Ren himself stood waiting.

He frowned and stopped her as she went to put her helmet on. “No. Leave it.” She hesitated for a moment before reluctantly tossing it onto her couch.

“Why do you insist on wearing that?”

“I’ve done it for years. Other than a handful of people, no one really knows what I look like. If I want to make my way around somewhere covertly my face itself is like a mask. It’s useful.”

“Hiding behind it makes you look weak… afraid. I’d prefer you have more pride than that.”

“Yes, Supreme Leader.”

As they made their way through the winding corridors, she couldn’t help but notice how everyone they came across scattered. Two troopers in front of the lift fell over each other trying to leave rather than share the small space with him.

*It must be lonely, to have everyone so terrified.* Amusement intertwined with pity at the thought.

The doors closed, and a small laugh escaped his lips “They’re right to be terrified of me.”

He lead her through his quarters back to the library, where a black case sat on a table. He poured her
a drink, amused by the obvious look of apprehension on her face.

“The Baroness told me you are quite fond of this particular spirit.”

She hadn’t replaced her holopad after her fit of rage, and it seemed the sudden break in communication caused the Baroness to go over her head. Beneath everything, the two women knew that they were really nothing more than tools to the other. There was no love lost between them; while each found the other almost invaluable, they both knew that their loyalty stopped where usefulness ended. Had the Baroness lost use for her?

“That's correct, it's very considerate of you.” the floral aroma of the Spirulean whiskey was almost aromatherapy in itself. She was grateful to have something for her nerves, and did her best not to clear the glass at once. Ichara wasn’t the only one tense at their meeting. While she was nervous about the reasons for it, Kylo was afraid Rey might make an appearance. He was concerned he’d pushed her too hard earlier and that she might use her advancing control over the bond to make an attempt at meeting his apprentice. He was well aware that Ichara’s loyalty was entirely conditional; knowledge of the force bond was something he would rather her not have to hold over him.

He finished his drink in one swift motion, staring off for a moment before speaking. “As you are aware, with the passing of Leader Snoke, it was thought that I was the last of the force users for the First Order. That is no longer the case.” he motioned over her armor, an air of disgust on his face. “You are more than a hired hand, more than some filthy mercenary. Take that off, you won’t be needing it anymore.”

She stared at him warily, confused by the strange request.

“I won’t ask you again.”

She finished her drink before setting it down to slowly pull at the buckles, wriggling out of her armor and letting it fall to the floor.

“All of it.”

She huffed and placed her saber beside her glass, removed her boots, and shimmied out of the rest of her clothing. She stood before him in nothing but tight fitting underclothes. His dark eyes looked her up and down, lingering over every curve; she felt more vulnerable than she ever cared to be.

“I acquired something more fitting of your new status”

He opened the trunk and passed her items one at a time- a black silken undertunic, a knee length outer tunic of black armor weave, a black and red silken tabard to go over it, with a thick belt of rancor skin, burnished a deep red with matching boots. The cut was similar to dark Jedi robes from the Empire’s time period. They were gorgeous but overly luxurious for what she’d usually wear.

“I understand that you’re quite fond of rancor hide.”

“Did my cousin tell you that as well?” her tone was neutral, hiding the irritation with her ridiculous relative.

This has Ruxinn written all fucking over it, these robes are decoration more than any type of armor.
She half wondered if he was trying to make her more exposed in the event of conflict. Or perhaps that's why he hadn’t bothered with any force-related training- she was going to be little more than a political pawn.

“Yes.”

His head tilted slightly to the side as he surveyed her, the same predatory glint from their night together returning to his eyes. Despite her best efforts, she found herself crumbling under the intensity of the darkness staring down, her heartbeat quickening. The last thing he pulled from the trunk was a hooded robe made from the same strange material as his. He walked behind her and pinned the top to each shoulder before plucking the hairpin from her bun. He ran his fingers through her hair as it tumbled loose and she shuddered under his fingertips.

“That’s better”

She closed her eyes, grasping desperately at the thinning straws of her resolve. When she opened them he was standing in front of her, looking highly pleased with himself.

“And now you truly look a woman of your station- apprentice and right hand to the Supreme Leader of the First Order.” The second bit was unexpected, and he elaborated as if he could see the question in her face. “You are second only to me- the other captains you worked with… even the General… they are beneath you. I am the only one you answer to.” He took a quick step forward to lean menacingly over her, lifting her chin with one gloved finger. “And you will answer to me.”

“Yes, Supreme Leader.” Jet black hair fell into his face as he stared down at her- she felt powerless, like she was floating before him, his bent index finger under her chin the only thing holding her in place. She took a shaky breath and brushed the lock of hair back, running her fingertips down the scar on his cheek, trailing to rest on her hand on his chest. He swallowed nervously at the contact but didn’t stop her, “I will answer to you,” she whispered, golden eyes flashing up to his.

“Do you know what else I hate about that mask?” He leant in closer, a slight huskiness creeping into his deep voice, "There is no beauty more pure... in all the galaxy... than someone’s face when the force flows through them. They should know your face, and they should fear it.” Still holding her in place, he kissed her softly. He was so powerful, so deadly, and it made the gentleness in the way he touched her that much more irresistible.

When he pulled away, what little mahogany could be seen in his irises was all but non-existent around blown pupils. Without saying a word he took her hand and lead her to his bedroom. She promised to never be with him like this again, but desire drowned out the dissent in the back of her mind. They undressed each other, kisses becoming more and more desperate with every layer that fell to the ground. She pushed into him, and he stepped back, stopping when the back of his knees hit the bed.

“Lie down.” her voice was low, but firm. He laid back onto the black comforter, and she paused to admire the killing machine spread before her. He could have sworn her eyes glowed in the dark as she stared down, a slight upturn to the corners of her mouth. After the disgrace of their last encounter, Ichara had told herself this was going to be about control. She moved like a cat, slinking up to him from the foot of the bed.

She paused to lazily run her tongue along the length of his cock, already hard and waiting for her. He gasped at the sensation, and whined as she took the tip of him into her mouth, slowly bobbing further and further down. His hands twisted in the sheets when she swallowed him into her throat, and he
groaned in disappointment when she released him- she wanted him close, but wasn’t going to grant his release yet.

She trailed kisses over his scarred torso to his neck, nipping with her teeth gently as she shifted atop him; easing herself onto his tip, then pulling away teasingly. He growled in frustration before grabbing her hips and forcefully lowering her onto him with a growl, taking every inch of him all at once. A soft cry escaped at the waves intermingling of pain and pleasure at the sudden intrusion. He pushed into her rhythmically, the pace becoming more frantic as he got closer to climax. She pulled back to watch him move beneath her, she wanted to watch him come for her.

“Look at me.” She grabbed his jaw with one hand and forced his gaze to meet hers. His eyes gleamed back in the darkness, and he started thrusting even harder, fingertips bruising porcelain skin as he slammed her hips down to meet his.

Her resolve crumbled to dust. She had been fighting back her own indulgence, but at the sight of him she came absolutely undone. He stared up so desperately, biting his lower lip, shoulder muscles rippling as he gripped her tight. Curses slipped from her lips as her body betrayed her, and a guttural cry ripped from her throat against her will as she came. He yanked her down towards him and his mouth sought hers, both gasping for air between heavy, passionate kisses. His hands shot back down to her hips to hold her to him as he bucked into her, and he could barely make out her name as he came.

“...’cara... I ... ah!”

“Yessss, come for me, come for me Kylo” she panted into his ear, the satisfaction hitting her that much harder, the sound of her name on his lips sending a shiver through him with his last few thrusts.

Between the force and how tightly he clung to her, she couldn’t discern where her feelings ended and his began. Slowly, his body relaxed, and his hands drifted up to her waist. He wrapped his arms around her, pulling her tight, and kissing her softly as the moment calmed. She allowed herself a reprieve from everything, to let all the frustration and games fall away... simply catching her breath and enjoying the closeness of having someone against her.

“Stay.” the word was barely audible.

“Alright.”

They shifted positions and she lay facing away from him, his arm draped over her. This evening had gone better than he had hoped for, and he felt he’d undone the damage from the first time they were together; a night which had ended in awkwardness and humiliation. He was still confused as to what exactly it was he felt for her, he just knew that he wanted; so he took, and it stroked his ego to see that she wanted to give. He sighed deeply, savoring the smell of incense on her hair as he drifted off to sleep.

The same emptiness from the other night crept into her- she felt an unsettling hollowness where there should be indifference, or at least satisfaction. She expected the night to be sleepless, but between his warmth and her exhaustion she passed out, curled up beside him -

Morning found them together, his face buried in her hair, and her hand holding his to her chest.
“Stars… what time is it?” Still hazy from sleep, it took her a moment to place her unfamiliar surroundings. When it came together, she went from tired to wide awake in a millisecond.

“What does it matter?” he mumbled groggily, using the arm still draped over her to pull her in closer.

“I... I have things to do, you know.” Truth was her schedule was entirely clear aside from training with him, but she wanted space and time to reassess this situation. Alone.

She found their strange new relationship confusing. It was as if he thought she was his now, but not in the traditional relationship sense. No, she wasn’t foolish enough to think that ‘affection’ had anything to do with this. He did things because he could, because he wanted to, and that was reason enough. His touch was possessive and his gaze a constant assessment- there was nothing loving in what he did. The more coherent she became, the more panic ate away at the edges of her mind.

“If you’re going to keep thinking so loudly then go,” he yanked his arm off her and rolled over sharply.

She sat up and huffed, glaring at the hulking figure beside her. Unsure of what to do, she pushed herself up and put an arm around him, kissing him on the nape of his neck before whispering in his ear. “My apologies. Call on me when you need me.”

After dressing she retrieved her armor and left, without another word exchanged between them.

If she had glanced to the right she would have seen that he was sitting up in bed watching her leave, brows knit together, thinking his own loud thoughts regarding the two of them. The worst part was he wondered if what she was thinking was true, that he really did relate to her in that way.

If she had stayed longer, she would have been there when Rey appeared at the foot of the bed.
Chapter Summary

Officers unwittingly share their thoughts on Ichara’s new station in the First Order.
Uncertainty twists Kylo’s arm, and Hux finds himself again pushed to the edge of his limits.
The three are struggling with rapidly blurring lines; what is real and what is contrived getting harder and harder to tell apart.

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Hux was already fairly irritable, which was of course exacerbated by the “Supreme Leader” and his ridiculous requests. He’d demanded his monthly leadership meeting take place a week early with less than a day’s notice. Schedules had to be swapped, others called in to cover different departments, not to mention that the meeting of multiple ships in one location had to be done a ways off the grid of standard transport.

Of course, Kylo Ren was completely free of the frustration and burden in coordinating all this; it fell squarely on the General’s shoulders. As always, though, he managed to pull it off. While the Supreme Leader might look at him with disdain, everyone in his military would ask “how high” if his demeanor even suggested he wanted them to jump.

With no surprise, I come through without failure. That black lump couldn’t run anything without me. He almost managed a self-satisfactory smile, but didn’t have the heart to even allow himself that- he was absolutely dreading the man’s presence. Ichara had given him comfort when she was at his side, and he found himself missing her for more reasons than he cared to list. He stared mournfully back at his reflection in the transparisteel rather than the stars beyond.

Yet again, Kylo Ren took issue with what she was wearing. Refusing to wear something as useless as just cloth, she’d dug through her equipment to find low-profile under armor. Meant to be worn under proper armor, it was thin, but still better than nothing. It set well underneath the robes and the additional bulk was barely noticeable. To her disappointment though it didn’t slip past him. He waited till they were on the lift to address it.

“I told you specifically that you weren’t to wear that filthy mercenary trash anymore.”

She sighed. “It’s a light under armor, barely noticeable. These robes serve little to no protection.”

He looked down at her, frowning. “Tell me, do you cling to that armor as you do your helmet? Out of fear? Do you doubt your abilities so deeply that you need something to hide behind? Perhaps you are a waste of my effort after all.”

His words sparked a fire of anger in her chest. “Common sense isn’t fear, Supreme Leader.”

He spun around and snatched her by the throat, massive hand crushing her windpipe shut. “So many excuses for weakness. If you are to be worth my while, I will cure you of this first.” he shoved her
into the wall when he released her, coughing as air sucked back into her lungs. The sudden aggression made her curious above all else. Surely he wasn’t that upset with something so small.

Hux closed his eyes at the sound of familiar boot steps echoing across the bridge. For once Kylo Ren was early, and he lamented that he didn’t have a few more moments of peace. He braced himself and spun on heel to greet the man he detested.

“Supreme Leader, you’re early, I-I, ah, yes, ah” He was completely floored by Ichara’s new appearance. Her hair fell freely across her shoulders, deep maroon lipstick accentuated the frown of her lips, and blackened shadow served to make her eyes look almost yellow as opposed to their usual amber hue.

“Are you quite alright, General Hux?” Her question lacked any air of actual concern.

Rather than continue stuttering he clasped his hands in front of him and nodded curtly to Kylo, making a point to ignore her snide remark.

“Shall we then?” He stalked past them, his mood darkening with every passing second.

She smirked as they trailed behind him to the meeting room. So perplexed by Kylo’s display of anger earlier, she’d completely forgotten that the General hadn’t seen her new, admittedly dramatic, attire. *At least it appears to have some uses.*

They entered a long, narrow room with a table running down the length of it, where about twenty officers sat waiting on them. Chatter stopped abruptly when the doors opened. Hux stood off to the side as Kylo approached the head of the table, pausing to stare down the room before addressing them.

“When I replaced Supreme Leader Snoke it created a vacancy. A leader must always have an apprentice, and I seem to have found that in the woman standing beside me. The First Order rose from the ashes of the Empire- The Empire that served under legends such as Emperor Palpatine and Darth Vader. Our military mission and the force are intertwined; each needs the other to be truly successful.” It took everything the General had in him to not roll his eyes. “That being said, anything she asks for, anything she needs, will be responded to attentively. You will act as if the orders came directly from myself. For your sake, I hope that everyone here understands.”

“Of course, Supreme Leader.” Hux did little to hide the curl in his lip as he nodded his head in acknowledgment. His eyes cut over to Ichara to glare at her, but to his disappointment, she was staring off into space.

She was distracted, skimming the thoughts of the officers seated before her. It actually hurt to hear their disappointment; most thought she’d turned on Hux, some even felt pity for her… the corner of her mouth twitched at the officer who was still holding out hope she’d kill Kylo. *I hope I don’t let you down, whoever you are.*

She was snapped from her stupor at Kylo’s finger under her chin, physically drawing her attention to him. “You will be my representative in strategy meetings when I am unable to attend. I have other matters to address at the moment. You will stay.” Hux found himself involuntarily clenching his fists at their closeness.

“Yes, Supreme Leader.” She couldn’t decide if this was a punishment or not, seeing as he never bothered to attend them before.
As soon as the doors shut behind him, Hux sighed and everyone visibly relaxed. The room was finally his.

“Yes, well, *that* was interesting,” voice dripping with sarcasm “Now, on to important, *relevant*, business.” It pleased him to see that his snarkiness hit its mark. She narrowed her eyes but said nothing, turning to stroll to the back of the room and stare into space.

Deciding to apply some pressure, he cleared his throat to get her attention “Ahem. *Apprentice*, if you are going to remain here you need to take a seat.” He was willing to risk the consequences to assert his dominance over the situation. Kylo insinuating that he had been bumped to third in the hierarchy made him physically ill, and if he was going to have to tolerate her in his space, she *would* listen to him.

*Careful, Hux.* The words were whispered into his mind, and he crinkled his nose in disgust at the intrusion. It seemed he now had *two* creatures willing to use the force on him as they pleased.

She turned and sauntered over to the seat nearest him, leaning over the shoulder of the officer seated in it. He stared forward stiffly.

"Move." He nearly head-butted her as he leapt up and went to a vacant seat.

She sat down and looked up at the Hux with a smile. “*Apprentice? Oh, you know* my name, General.” He could feel himself flush at the tone of her voice. It was a small thing, perhaps no one else caught it, but he felt put on the spot in front of his men. Anger mingled with embarrassment, and he pulled at his collar nervously as he went over the meeting’s agenda. She sat attentively, eyes boring into him during the discussion of military strategy that didn’t concern her one bit. Every time he glanced over her eyes were locked onto his and he felt pressured by her gaze. It seemed his order had backfired.

Relief washed over him when the meeting was over. Most of them had to get back to their respective stations quickly but a few stragglers lingered behind, discussing meeting up in the officer’s cantina later on. To his chagrin she stayed seated, only rising once the last officer left.

“Congratulations, *Apprentice*, I’m sure you are quite thrilled with yourself.”

She moved till she was uncomfortably close, staring coldly up at him. She could smell the familiar tea and mint on his breath and it wrenched at her heart. She missed him… and she hated it.

“You know, General, I should *make* you say my name. Just to be sure you remember.”

“And how exactly would you go about doing that, *beast*?”

She snatched his collar and pulled him down to her, lips inches apart. Impulse had taken over and she’d almost kissed him; something told her that he wouldn’t have stopped her. They stared at each other, faces twisted in anger, eyes blinking with uncertainty. She shoved him away and took a step back. He had his hooks sunk into the very center of her, stirring emotions in a way that no other man could. It made her furious.

“I need my holopad replaced as soon as possible, General. Consider that an order.”

“I don’t quite feel you’re in the position to be giving orders to *me*, apprentice.” despite what Kylo
had said, he refused to subordinate to yet another force user on his ship.

She stopped and looked over her shoulder as she turned to leave “You and what you ‘feel’ mean nothing to me.”

The harsh dismissal flipped a switch, and he went from frustrated to livid in a fraction of a second. He grabbed her by the hood of her robe and yanked her backward into his chest, wrapping one arm around her waist to hold her to him “I mean nothing to you!?” he snarled as the other hand grabbed her jaw, turning her head slightly so he could growl into her ear.

“Is that why you wailed to the heavens when I was inside you?”

He pulled her even tighter, and could feel the soft moan in her throat at the motion. “Is that why you still dream of me taking you every night?” her heartbeat quickened at the closeness, at the feel of his hands on her, and she found herself hanging on every salacious word “My name left your lips like you were whispering a prayer, beast. I bet you still call out for me when-”

The door suddenly opened with a hiss and he quickly released her, stumbling backwards.

“General Hux I, oh, sorry…” the younger officer’s eyes darted between the two “um, I just remembered a couple more questions regarding salvage work.”

“Do come in Acana.”

Ichara hastily flipped up the hood of her robe and rushed out of the room.

He called after her, "Apprentice, we will continue this conversation at a later date.”

The feeling of the general’s arms around her kept interrupting her train of thought throughout the day. His breath on her neck lit a fire that refused to go out, burning somewhere between rage and desire. Just when she thought she was moving past everything he had to go do something like that. Wicked man.

It was impossible to focus, and found herself grateful that she hadn’t heard from Kylo since the meeting. It was as if her mind wasn’t her own, and the last thing she wanted was him to hear Hux’s whispers echoing in her head. Regardless of her long term goals, though, right now it was important that she stay in good standing with him. After lurking around her quarters the remainder of the day, she decided to go see him. He was brooding in the library, walking back and forth like a caged animal. He glanced up in acknowledgment but said nothing.

“You’re angry with me. Why.”

He stopped and scowled at her, but looked tired more than anything. “You don’t trust me. You won’t obey simple commands. I find myself doubting my decision, doubting all this.”

She laughed softly and slowly approached him, “You chastise me for my supposed fear yet here you are afraid of change. Despite our gifts, some could argue that we are still only human. We can’t help but have fears-”

She stepped into his path and placed a hand on his chest to stop his pacing, “Though I do hear they are easier to face when you’re not alone.”
He clenched his jaw and stood in silence, staring down at her.

“Let me stay with you tonight, Kylo.”

He could feel the genuine concern in her voice, and when his eyes searched her face to look for a lie-there wasn’t one. Perhaps the scavenger had put that seed of doubt in his mind, and there really wasn't anything to worry about at all.

“Alright.”

“You look exhausted, come on.” she put her hand on his lower back and lead him to bed.

She started to undress and he flushed, tossing her an undershirt to wear. He halfway smiled at how ridiculously large it was. There was a twinge in his chest, looking at her like this; like he was seeing her as an actual person for the first time. They crawled under the comforter and he immediately pulled her to him. There was something to cling to in her, though he didn’t know what it exactly it was. At that moment he didn’t care.

This time she turned to face him, gently brushing her fingers down his cheek before snuggling into his chest. “Goodnight, Kylo.”

He kissed her on the forehead but said nothing, running his fingers through her hair, distracted. After considering the snippets he overheard in her mind earlier, combined with Rey's strange insistence that Ichara would turn on him, he found that he was now the one in bed with a troubled mind.

Earlier that day he was propped up in bed, trying to clear the grogginess of sleep from his head after Ichara left. Her doubts replayed in his mind and it put him in a decidedly horrible mood. To make things worse, Rey appeared at the foot of his bed, a newfound resolve in her words.

"Look, I know you won't listen to me, Ben, so I'm going to stop seeing you after this. There's only so much I can do until you let me help you. Your mother told me you were hardheaded, and she was right."

"Don't you-" he went to leap out from under the covers to go stand over her, but caught himself- he wasn't wearing anything underneath them. "Don't you dare bring up my mother." he snapped.

Rey seemed to have noticed his hesitation, and realized that under the sheets he was likely... she bit her lip and couldn't even bring herself to finish the thought, her cheeks blushing a bright red.

They paused in awkward silence for a moment before Rey found her voice again. "I, um, Ben, I just came here to say that when she turns on you, and she will turn on you, that I'll be here for you. Unconditionally. No matter what. Because I know where you belong, and it's not here. That's all. I'll leave you alone now." and with that, she disappeared.

He fell back into the pillows, closing his eyes with a sigh. He wanted to believe this was some kind of Resistance trick, but he didn't think she'd have the heart (or the ability) to lie to him so bluntly. Where did this suddenly come from? Having an apprentice was supposed to solidify his reign, not have everyone question him.
All he could do was make sure he kept Ichara close and fostered a sense of true loyalty in her. Snoke had done so through power and pain, and Kylo hoped there was an easier way of attaining it than that.

On Hux’s Incredibly Short List of Enjoyable Things, informal meetings in the officer’s cantina was one of them. While he could find quite a few competent people, talented ones were an entirely different matter. They drank and discussed finer points of strategy, recounted old war tales, and bragged about their military successes.

The younger officer from earlier interjected with a somewhat off-topic question that took Hux by surprise.

“So, Kylo Ren’s apprentice… she used to work for you, right? What’s she like?”

The table went silent as he paused, lips turning down in a dramatic frown at the thought of her. “Yes, yes she did. To be quite honest… she’s an insufferable bitch.”

The officer was afraid he’d overstepped, and the entire table laughed nervously, relieved when Hux didn’t snap at them.

“Our dear Supreme Leader has done me a quite a favor as far as I’m concerned” he picked up his glass and finished his drink, mind racing to come up with a subject change.

Emboldened, the man decided to push further, though “Sooo… you two… didn’t, weren't, ah…” the question drifted off as Hux’s eyes narrowed above the rim of his glass and he quickly backpedaled “So you’re glad to be free of her then, that’s, that’s good.”

“Yes, Acana, I would say it is excellent.” The last syllable ended sharply, and his voice was decidedly less friendly than the earlier banter. Hux stared him down as he stood up slowly. “I require a refill.”

He skulked to the bar- any decent mood he’d managed to wrangle out of this horrible day had just been put down. He stayed for a few more rounds, making a mental note to move Acana to a support ship in Hutt space or anywhere else decidedly miserable. Indulging more than his strict self control would usually allow, Hux found himself fairly light headed as he walked back to his quarters.

He collapsed onto his couch, wishing he’d done more to the nosy officer in the cantina, but knew that would have only lent credence to the rumors. His eyes drifted to the replacement holopad he’d gotten for her, still sitting on his desk across the room.

No. Don’t you dare.

His mind kept chastising him, denouncing his drunken idea, but his body moved on its own accord and soon found himself standing in front of her doors, punching in his override code.

“You wanted a new one, I got it.” he announced as he strode in, “I do hope this was soon enough for our dearest apprentice.” It clattered as he tossed it onto the coffee table. He noted with disgust that one of the walls had been assaulted by a saber, riddled with deep gouges.

"Is there some unwritten law that all force users have no regard for what's around them? You are going to pay to have this repaired, beast.”
Silence.

He started to feel sheepish—barging in while she was asleep would be awkward. He stepped softly to her bedroom to see her bed unmade and empty. He stormed into the room as if he was somehow missing something.

_That would mean… no._

He ungraciously plopped down on the edge of her bed and sighed. In his fairly intoxicated state, his normal state of perpetual anger was replaced with feelings of defeat. He turned to lay back on her bed, the smell of her lingering on the pillows haunting him. His mind drifted back to the last time he stared up at this same ceiling, and he closed his eyes. Before he knew it, he’d fallen asleep.

Hux awoke with a start, nearly falling to the floor as he launched himself upright, absolutely horrified. He fumbled to checked his holopad—he’d been asleep for almost six hours. As he leapt to his feet, he noticed his crop on her nightstand. Without thinking he snatched it up and tucked it into an inner pocket in his great coat before rushing to return to his quarters.
Hux is tricky as ever, Kylo is as unpredictable as ever, and the Baroness is mucking up things for Hux yet again.

She didn’t always stay with Kylo- the tumultuous state of their interactions saw to that. He seemed torn as what he wanted from her, and the manic behavior was wreaking havoc on her nerves. During some training sessions he would be calm, seemingly entertained by her frustration if something was taking longer to master. His corrections were kind, and he was patient.

The rest of the time, though, he was gruff and short-tempered. Often he’d yell what a disappointment she was while sparring rougher than necessary. When he was like this the very air around them felt strained. It threatened to snap their mutual tolerance of each other and lay bare the ugly bones of their relationship; both hateful, both unable to trust or be trusted, but stuck here together nonetheless. She wanted to run him through, and he grimaced like he could barely stand the sight of her.

But the nights they did spend together he would hold her tight, as if she were the only thing anchoring him to this plane. He was gentle, kissing her softly, running his fingers through her hair, falling asleep always with his arm over her. Sometimes he’d mumble a compliment, but more often than not they laid together in silence. In the mornings she would leave soon after waking, spending the day dreading what man was going to greet her at training that day.

Sometimes they went a day or so without meeting, hiding from the world and each other in their quarters. It was during these periods of his reclusion that she would read from the Sith tome and meditate, thick plumes of incense swirling through the room. Never had she reached so desperately into the darkness. Up until now her use of the force was survival, what would have almost been considered “grey” as opposed to dark or light. She found herself in unknown depths, treading water instead of advancing, and used the pain from her confictions to immerse herself in the ever darkening grip of the force.

*The killer, the general, her fleet.*

She chanted this mantra, a reminder of her dedication to the endgame; but the path to it was clouded. It wasn’t just the timing, but how exactly it was to be done was still a mystery. Trying to answer these issues while simultaneously handling Kylo and dodging Hux was wearing her down.

Luck had evaded her yet again, and to her dismay, today he was the horrible man.

“You aren’t trying!”

“I *am* trying! You’re a foot taller than me, Kylo, there’s only so much I can do when you have me
fighting like this!” He always harped on the ineffectiveness over her over-head swings, and his height combined with the fact that the blade of his saber was longer made it impossible for her to swing through successfully.

“That excuse is pathetic.”

She couldn’t even formulate a response and growled in frustration as she swung again.

He pointed at her left hand in frustration “Why is your damn hand… wait.” the anger disappeared and he chewed his lip, lost in thought. “Give me your saber.”

She handed it over reluctantly, unsure of where his train of thought was going. The hilt was sleek and solid black, save the silver buttons and one silver claw on the emitter. There was a slight curve milled into the metal that was only visible when looked at from the right angle.

“Where’s the other one?” He recalled the memory he’d plucked from her mind of her stealing a pair of sabers when she was younger.

“Ex-excuse me?”

“This curve- the fighting style is different when you wield two sabers. The indentation makes it easier to spin them. They come in pairs, so where is the other one.”

“Oh, I, ah, lost it before I came here. What does it matter?”

“So you’re used to fighting with two sabers, and never thought to tell me?”

“I didn’t think it mattered, I-”

He shoved the saber to her chest and ran his hands down his face in frustration. “Just go. We’re done for today.”

“I’m sorry, Kylo, if-”

“Get away from me.” he growled, stalking to the corner with the automated training droids.

“Good, you’re being fucking awful anyways.” she muttered, holstering her saber as she stormed out.

“Did you have something to say!?”

She ignored him, grateful to have made it just past the doors before he decided to drag her back into the room. Her chest burned like an inferno, and the stress demanded a physical release. An officer ran into her as she flew around a corner, the impact cracking her thin shell of self control. Without thinking she spun him around by his shoulder and punched him square in the face, turning to continue on to her quarters without saying a word.

Still unsatiated, she decided to take a page out of Kylo’s book and dipped into a supply closet. Screams echoed in the small room as she wailed on whatever it was that surrounded her, raining down destruction till the smell of burnt plasma was unbearable. She fell to her knees, chest heaving and hands shaking as she stared at the glowing gouges of molten metal. Various canisters and their contents were scattered about the floor, one shelf barely holding onto the wall. Wiping the tears from her cheeks she took a deep breath, and left as if nothing had happened.
“What happened to your face, lieutenant?” Hux arched an eyebrow at the man before him, a fresh split in his lip.

“The apprentice, sir, I ran into her... it was an accident, and... she hit me. Then, um, the supply room on level 26, she went in there and, well... you know how those people are”

“Indeed I do. I'll discuss this with her.”

His eyes widened in fear “No! General, it’s my fault, I-”

He held up his hand and cut the man off “Dismissed.”

The man wrung his hands nervously as he walked to his station, fearful that there would be a round of retribution should Hux say anything to her.

It had been almost two weeks since the last time Hux saw her, and he jumped at the excuse to summon her. Every day that passed he kept expecting her to traipse into his office, rudely demanding something from him, and every day that she didn’t he found himself missing her a little bit more. He left the bridge to mull the situation at his desk, tip of his thumb resting on his teeth, lost in thought. His holopad buzzed, and sure enough the storage room had been decimated.

It was bad enough having Kylo maiming equipment, but he refused to add the cost of a second feral force user to that stack of damages.

The next day he gave a stormtrooper specific orders to tell her to come to his office, then take the rest of his shift off. He wanted her coming to him alone. After the trooper left he waited a few minutes before leaving his office to stop in front of a closed door, waiting. He was afraid he’d timed it incorrectly until Ichara came whirling around the corner like a phantom. She almost tripped over her own feet when she saw Hux leaning up against the wall, smiling.

“Fancy seeing you here” he purred before snatching her arm and dragging her into the supply closet, shoving her into a set of mangled shelves as the doors closed behind them.

“Ah, General Hux. What an unpleasant surprise.” She was startled to see him, and did her best to cover it with condescending snark.

“I have absolutely had it!” he jabbed an index finger into her chest to emphasize every word. “I will not tolerate this from you!”

She flicked his hand out of the way and sauntered to the back of the closet, running a finger along one of the gouges she’d put there “Mmm. Dangerous words, Hux…” She turned and leant against the back wall, arms folded as she stared at him ambivalently. “Especially for someone who can’t back them up.”

Hux laughed. It was a harsh, mirthless sound that sent a shiver through her.

“Kylo Ren can dress you up like his own personal force harlot if he likes, but you and I both know that underneath it all you are still my beast.” He reached into his great coat and removed his crop-
flicked out of the darkness to rest underneath her chin. “Tell me it isn’t so.”

She was completely taken by surprise. He must have come to her quarters when she was with Kylo—perhaps the jealousy was the reason behind his sudden boldness? Regardless of the motivation, she found herself remembering what attracted her to him in the first place. He was sharp, cunning, always coiled like a venomous snake ready to strike... and stars she wanted his bite. Her throat bobbed as she swallowed nervously, unsure of what he intended to do, and more importantly of how she would respond.

“Fuck you, Hux.” was all she could manage to say; it came out as a choked whisper, much more pathetic than she’d intended. He smirked—her breathless tone an admission in itself.

He pushed up against her jaw and lifted her face to meet his. “Is that so?”

She stared back in silence; her breath caught in her throat and stomach in knots. She hated how her body betrayed her, aching to have him once more. Hux leant in cautiously, as if she were a trigger set to pull.

No... stars no... don’t... please.. She was begging to the universe to save her from herself as he softly pressed his lips to hers. It was like the world around her sped up and stopped at the same time, and she was stuck in the middle of it all, torn apart. His mind raced at the realization of what he had done, of what he was still doing. While he told himself this wasn’t his initial intention, part of him knew it was all along.

He pulled away; gaze sharp, victorious as his eyes stared into hers.

“I knew it.”

Ichara blinked, speechless. She wanted nothing more than for him to pin her against the wall and take her amidst the destruction around them, but instead shoved past him and rushed out of the room without saying a word. It was all too much. Hux tapped the crop in his hand, smiling as he watched her leave.

She wasn’t lost, not yet.

He was so involved with his plan that he’d left his holopad on his when he’d gone to meet her. He strolled back to his office, distracted as his mind ran through the situation he found himself in. He wasn’t entirely sure what the implications of their interaction were, but he allowed himself to revel in the satisfaction. She could have done anything she wanted, and in that moment what she wanted was him. The game had changed.

While Kylo’s grandstanding might intimidate everyone else, it hadn’t pulled her away like he thought. His heart soared, and rather than the usual internal monologue chastising him, he allowed himself to revel in this victory. Out of spite, he told himself, not due actual feelings or attachments, that's ridiculous.

In the brief time he was gone he’d missed a handful of messages from the Baroness from Canto Bight. He put them off till later that day, not wanting to deal with the taxing woman. While it wasn’t really her fault, he resented her for being the start of his problems with Ichara in the first place. Not only for essentially forcing her on him, but for being the catalyst that lead to their falling out.
It was ultimately his paranoia and inability to control his temper that lead to the disastrous end to their relationship, but it was easier to have a target for his ire rather than stalking about in his self-loathing. He’d already finished most of his work for the day, and lacking excuses to further put them off, he opened the messages with a sigh. Sure enough, she served only to bother him further.

With a groan, he sent a message requesting Kylo Ren’s presence.

Kylo and Ichara entered the bridge like twin spectres, the tension between the two apparent. After receiving Hux’s message he went by her quarters to bring her with him, and they both walked in silence. She was still angry with him, but he didn’t care. He wasn’t even sure her attending was necessary but he liked the way the General squirmed in her presence. She was a trophy for him to rub in his face, a constant reminder that he won the game Hux started.

Frustrating the man might put him in a better mood, and he wondered if he might smooth things over with her afterward. Kylo had a notoriously short temper, and he was still agitated by her shortcomings the day prior regarding the saber incident.

“Ah, Supreme Leader. It would appear Baroness Orgida has been unable to contact you directly.” Kylo had seen the many messages from her and ignored them. He had no further use for her and wasn’t going to entertain her political ambitions. “She requests your presence at a gala on Canto Bight, with promises there will be many influential sentients there worth meeting. She has requested that I extend the invitation on her behalf.”

Ichara smirked, “Well, you are on friendly terms with the Baroness, remember? Everything with her comes at a cost- and one of those is attending her ridiculous social events.” After contacting her cousin to acquire the robes she found herself imprisoned in, she was entertained that he’d now have to pay the price for consorting with her.

Hux swore he saw genuine fear flash across the man’s face. Kylo’s mind shot back to his younger days, his mother dragging him to various gatherings of leaders and diplomats. Well, when he wasn’t just left at home with a caretaker.

“No. No I will not be doing that. I don’t subscribe to the backbiting politics of the lesser. Hux, you will go in my place. It’s beneath me.”

“Beneath you? Is that what makes it so logical that I attend? That’s ridiculous.” The words left his mouth without thinking. Such blatant disrespect was the quickest way to get Hux to short circuit, and that he did.

Kylo went to raise his hand and force choke him, but Ichara grabbed his arm reflexively to stop him. “I think what the General is trying to say is that-”

Before she could finish he yanked his arm free of her grasp and threw her into a control panel. A wheezing cry was forced from her lips as the air was knocked out of her. The officer manning it was too startled to even help her up and just sat there, hands on their chest and mouth agape. She sat for a moment; a dazed, crumpled heap on the floor. The silence in the room was deafening as she rose to her feet, golden eyes blazing beneath the hair fallen in her face.

*Serves you right, beast*. While Hux was amused at the sight, he also found he wanted to shoot him in the face for what he did. The fingers on his blaster hand twitched at the idea. She put herself in
harm’s way to spare him Kylo’s cruelty, and while he found it somewhat touching, he scoffed indignantly. *I can handle myself, I don’t need her charity.*

“If I want your opinions I will ask you for them, apprentice,” Kylo growled.

“My apologies, Supreme Leader,” she muttered between clenched teeth. She wanted to threaten him with a fight to the death here and now and hack him to bits. Everyone in the room was frozen as the two glared at each other.

She slowly made her way back to his side, skimming the thoughts of the officers as she returned to her position. The pity made her ill. While it was good to see they didn’t hate her like they did Kylo, feigning weakness at his side was eroding her patience. His eyes followed her, staring her down to make his point. Not wanting to be thrown again, she conceded and averted her eyes to the floor, cursing him under her breath.

“You. You will go with him.”

“I, what!? He can take Phasma, there’s no reason *I* should have to go.” She was willing to risk another toss across the room to put a stop to this.

Hux frowned, clasping his hands behind his back so hard he thought he might break a finger. “Unfortunately, Phasma is on shore leave.” After a few gruff reminders of his promise to her, Hux relented and gave his top officer and her girlfriend a two week pass for leave. The timing couldn’t have been worse. “But the elite guard will be more than enough.” They both scrambled to find reasons to avoid each other, unable to stay entirely civil.

“The General is right, my presence would be unnecessary.”

“She would be a hindrance, my guard would have to be split between the both of us.”

“It would be a waste of my much more *valuable* time.”

“Now that you are the *apprentice* to our Supreme Leader, I would be distracted ensuring your safety. You should stay.”

“Enough!” Kylo glared at him, and Ichara looked back down to the ground, bracing herself for another round of punishment. “You *both* will go, and you will see to it that those who have not yet sworn allegiance to the First Order do so. I grow weary of the many holes the Resistance have to hide in.”

She said nothing and nodded reluctantly, hand rubbing what was likely a blossoming bruise on her shoulder. “Yes, Supreme Leader.”

“I expect the news of more allies and support when you return. We are done here.” He turned to leave before Hux could respond.

She snatched Hux by the arm and pulled him to her, snarling under her breath “Don’t think I’ve forgotten that you and I still have an *issue* to address.”

He leant down into her face, being sure to make a show for the staff on the bridge.

“Is that supposed to be a threat?” he sneered “Schedule a meeting with me in my office any time, my
schedule is always open for you, apprentice.”

Air hissed as she exhaled through clenched teeth, releasing him roughly as she went to follow Kylo off the bridge.

He briefly considered shooting the pair in the back as they left, setting himself free from the tyranny of the force, but all he could do was sigh.

As a last ditch effort, Hux decided to reach out to Phasma to see if she might consider returning early.

Phasma heard a muffled buzz of her holopad in her bag.

Mara scowled “He promised, Phas. We both are overdue for a break!”

“I know but it could be….” she closed her eyes and sighed “I was going to say important, but it’s fine.”

Hux was surprised by her lightning fast response- there was no text, though, only an image attachment.

- That rude hand gesture was entirely unnecessary.
  If I'm murdered it's YOUR fault.
  Enjoy the rest of your vacation, and tell Mara I said hello.
  -A
  -

Chapter End Notes

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I had trouble with the flow of this chapter, but I hope you guys like it :) Super excited for the next couple chapters!

(also the chapter name is a play on "swish & flick" from Harry Potter, except Hux has a crop instead of a wand lol)

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*Fun lore fact- One must be especially in tune with the dark side to use Sith magic without repercussions, but sometimes even those who were strong with the dark side suffered side effects to both their body and their psyche. Between her studying of the tome and Kylo keeping her on her toes, I'm hoping to paint a decent picture of what's happening to her, and I hope there's a visible contrast between her composure when she first arrived and as time progresses. (sorry to write a novel in the notes :P )
Counting Straws

Chapter Summary

The straw that pushed the domino? Things escalate and everyone snaps a little bit. Even Rey is feeling the pressure.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When they reached the lift, Ichara clenched her fists and kept on walking. She was absolutely livid with Kylo both for throwing her and forcing her into this situation. He stepped back out of the lift, confused.

“Where are you going?”

“Anywhere you’re not!” she called out before quickly dipping down one of the winding hallways, halfway disappointed that he didn’t follow after her. Perhaps he was just as fed up with her as she was him. She wandered aimlessly around the ship before finally retiring to her quarters. Sleep was elusive, trapped between nightmares fueled by fears lurking in her subconscious. Force visions weren’t something she’d ascribed much faith in, but the vividness of the experience took them a step closer to reality than dream.

In one she gave in to Hux, and Kylo killed him when he pulled it from his mind, with her pinned-helpless to stop him. In another she never got her revenge, and years later she was still serving at Kylo’s side, burned out and broken, Hux long dead. In yet another her cousin betrayed her to the Resistance, and the scavenger executed her in one bright blue arc. The last nightmare ended with her impaled on the end of the crackling red saber, Hux screaming out her name from far in the distance.

She jumped when she came to, falling to the floor with a graceless thud, tangled in sweaty sheets. She laid on the cold floor in defeat for a moment before groggily freeing herself and checking the time- it was only 0200. That made three hours of what could barely be called ‘rest’. Forfeit seemed to be the only option, and she dragged her feet to the refresher, sliding down the shower wall to let the water fall over her. Before stepping out, she flicked the water to cold, jolting her awake. She spent the wee hours curled up with a cup of bitter coffee over her ancient book, mostly skimming through the fog of exhaustion.

Her mind drifted, wondering how long it would be till the caf opened. Usually food was brought to her, but the thought of terrorizing people with her presence while getting breakfast made her smile. Stars, I’m even starting to think like Kylo Ren.

Ichara’s plan was to ignore him until returning from the gala, but sure enough she ended up in front of the training room doors at noon. At least I can make him miserable before I have to go suffer. She sighed and entered begrudgingly, surprised to see a stormtrooper in the room with him.

“I knew you’d come.”

“What is he doing here?”
“You’re going somewhere with a lot of very powerful and very dishonest people. I need to make sure your abilities with the force are strong enough to tell fact from fiction.”

“If you think I’m that inept why don’t you just go yourself?”

“What, is this too difficult for you?”

He’d noticed that both she and Hux had the same weakness- ego. Neither could turn down a challenge.

“What is it you want me to do.”

“I’ve told him a story, and he’s going to retell it you, but part of it is a lie. Find it.” He crossed his arms, chewing his lip as he watched her.

She interrupted before the trooper could finish the first sentence. “None of it’s a lie, he’s recounting it exactly as you told him. That is the catch you wanted me to find. This is idiotic. ” She closed her eyes and clawed out her hand, determined to dispel any thoughts of weakness. The man fell to his knees as she aggressively split into his mind.

“He wasn’t born on this ship, but the First Order is all he knows. He has feelings for someone he trained with but she moved up much faster than him, and he never gets to see her anymore. She’s blonde, loves loth-cats. This was his first day being assigned to patrol this level. He had a bad feeling about it from the start because… this is one of the worst levels... because we train down here… and everyone hates us. Mostly you though... because you have no regard for anyone around you, you’re petulant, and you’re afraid to go somewhere that reminds you… oh, sorry. I got distracted.”

She opened her eyes to see him looming over her. He pointed at the trooper. “Get. Out. Now.”

“Oh, am I to read your mind now? Because-”

“Reminds me of what? Say it. Reminds me of what?”

The voice of reason in her mind told her to stop, that she could be risking too much- but she couldn’t help herself. The desire to cut him down was just too strong. She licked her lips before looking up at him with an air of amusement.

“It reminds you of your mother, back to the days you were the prince of a decimated planet.”

One of his greatest fears had been realized- someone on the ship, one of the worst possible people, knew the truth about his family. He reacted without thinking and slapped her across the face, hard. She yelped and fell to the ground at the force of it, holding a hand to her cheek; it had gone numb, and warm blood trickled from a split in the corner of her lip. Something inside of her broke.

Using her crouched position to her advantage, she used all of her upward momentum to push behind a punch aimed square at his mouth. He stumbled, shocked that she would dare to strike him. He touched his lip and rubbed the blood between his fingers in disbelief.

“I fucking hate you!” She screamed, following with an uppercut from her left hand. He grabbed it before it could connect, and yanked her upwards towards him.
“Who told you? How do you know!?!?” he yelled over the cocktail of curses pouring from the woman flailing at him. He was more concerned with what she knew than her lashing out.

She kneed him in the gut and he stumbled backward, and his giant hand clamped down onto her wrist to drag her down with him. They both fell to a heap on the floor, and she scrambled to sit upright over him, trying in vain to free her left hand from his grasp.

“I heard you whining to yourself on the bridge. You’re louder than you think.” she spat, raising her free hand to land another blow.

He rolled her over onto her back with surprising speed for someone his size, and straddled her.

“You will give me everything.” He held her down, blood drizzling from his mouth onto her face; teeth bared and every sinew taut as he forced his way into her mind. An animalistic shriek tore from her as she tried to fight him out, writhing underneath him. He grabbed her forehead with one hand and pinned her down by the throat with the other. His strength terrified her, and she could feel him in the cracks that spider-webbed through her consciousness.

She wasn’t lying- he could see her on the bridge, picking up flashes from his memory. He pushed deeper and could feel the strain that plagued her, the musings on his instability. There was fear; not so much of him, but of his unpredictable behavior.

“You’re… so horrible… to me…” she forced the words through her clenched jaw. It was all she could do to keep him away from the attic of her mind, the private things she had to hide at all costs.

He saw her little ritual of taking a deep breath, clasping her hands, and steeling herself every day before entering their training sessions. He felt her loathing, and even pity for him… but underneath it all was an underlying fear of failure. He thought she was afraid of failing him.

“That’s enough!!!” The General’s voice vaulted across the room, snatching him out of her head and back to reality.

“The stormtrooper you two brutes saw fit to ‘experiment’ on informed me there was a disturbance.” More specifically, he’d broken protocol and contacted Hux directly, telling him Kylo had attacked her. He was so caught up in Ichara’s defiance that he hadn’t noticed the trooper was still in the room when they started fighting.

Kylo yanked his hand back and looked back down at her, wild eyed.

“I won’t tell anyone, now get the hell off me.” she grumbled. They both hastily staggered to their feet, equally shaken by what had just happened.

The General appraised their bloodied faces like a teacher that caught misbehaving children. He noted Kylo especially looked like a kicked dog. Ah look, force users in their natural state. How lovely.

“I can’t very well take her if you kill her first.” Hux waved her over to him. “Come. I’ll escort you to the medical bay.” Kylo said nothing, staring after her as she left. He ignited his saber just before the doors closed, and the sounds of destruction could be heard from within.

He hadn’t expected to feel guilt, but she was right; he had no idea how reactive she was to his temperament, and he was kind of, well… horrible. No one else ever seemed to care, but then again they were used to as much from their superiors. Their relationship was different. He absolutely
expected her to follow his orders, but he couldn’t deny there was more to it. Unable to handle the myriad of emotions fighting inside, he ignited his saber and handled it the best way he knew how.

Hux marched ahead of her in silence until they reached the lift, waving his guards away. “I’ve got it from here. Meet me at my office.”

He accosted her as soon as the doors shut. “Are you trying to get yourself killed!? What the hell was that?”

“He hit me, so I punched him in the mouth… then it escalated.”

“Ichara…” he sighed “While I can appreciate that more than anyone else, you’ve got to be careful.” The audible concern in his voice bothered him, so he remedied it with something dismissive. “Without you, that cretin will return to harassing me. Frankly I don’t have the time for his tantrums right now.”

“I’ll do what I want.” It was a childish response, but she had no energy left to spend on anyone else.

“Well if what you want is to die, ask me nicely and I’ll take care of it for you.”

“I do have something to ask you though, General…” she stepped uncomfortably close to him, wet face glistening in the dim light. He went to recoil from the mess, but she snatched him down to her and their mouths crashed together, the metallic tang of blood sending sparks through him as her tongue dipped into his mouth. Her arms pulled tight around his waist. While he was worried about his uniform being sullied, he hadn’t realized how much he missed the feeling of her pressing into him. He stumbled to pin her against the wall, hips rolling into her with a moan. All too soon the doors slid open and he jumped back, ensuring no one waiting saw the spectacle. “Tell me, do you like the way his blood tastes?”

With that she slipped out of the lift, grinning mischievously at what she felt was the perfect revenge for his behavior the other day. As soon as the doors closed he punched the emergency stop button, giving him a moment to regain composure. He leant against the wall and groaned as he palmed the tight bulge in his pants. He was ashamed that the thought of relieving himself flitted through his mind... though it likely wouldn’t take long.

He’d never been so simultaneously aroused and disgusted in all his life.

She could fix her face, of course, but she went to the medbay for a different reason. Apparently, word of Kylo’s orders to obey her traveled quickly, as rather than resistance the doctor gave her exactly what she wanted. She made it back to her quarters and took a quick shower, washing the frustrations of the day down the drain. Sat on the foot of the bed, Ichara pulled a syringe from the pocket of her robes and jabbed it into her arm, falling back and fading into a blissfully vacant sleep.

“Stars, I’ll never have peace, will I?” she slurred, waking to a rough shove from… Hux. Hux? Yes, Hux. She tried squinting to make out who it was, but the splash of orange in her vision was all she needed.

“Who gave you this? What is it!??” Normally she’d have time to situate after a dose, but the potency combined with her exhaustion knocked her out on the spot, and she was laid back on the foot of the bed, syringe beside her. He was horrified.
“Sedative... it’s, it’s fine... I needed to sleep... need sleep.” she shimmied up and collapsed back into the bed, sighing deeply at the comfort of her pillows. “Yessss…”

“Bloody hell, he really is killing you, isn’t he. Ichara, look at me, look at me.” he grabbed her face and she blinked lazily at him. “You’ve been asleep for over fourteen hours. That’s ridiculous. It’s 0900”

“Five more minutes.” she mumbled, pushing his hand away. Rather than getting in bed properly, she grabbed the corner of her covers and folded it over herself like a taco, wiggling down to hide her face.

He grumbled and sat on the side of the bed. “Listen, you ungrateful creature. I came to…” he sighed “I came apologize for what I said to you, for what started all this.”

A snort emanated from under the covers. “Which time? You’ll need a list. Get Mitaka on that. That’s… that’s an order.”

He yanked the blankets off of her, scowling. “You know damn well what I mean. When I, well, the thought of something happening to you, it, ah…” Hux stuttered through his response. He knew how he felt, but hearing himself say it made him feel embarrassed at the vulnerable honesty of it all.

“Well, I did want to apologize, but I’m not wasting my breath on an insolent beast.”

She wagged her finger at him, a sloppy grin on her face, “Don’t call me that, you know what it does to me.”

He arched an eyebrow. “Well, it would seem I certainly do now. Anything else you care to tell me?”

“I…” she reached out and took his hand, squeezing it. “I’m terrified I’ll be the death of you and there’s nothing I can do about it.

She squeezed her eyes shut. “I need you… to… the cuff… side table...” The loopy state she found herself in was quickly turning into vertigo, and nausea threatened the back of her throat.

He looked confused but picked it up and put in on her wrist.

“Black button.”

With a hiss a hypodermic needle shot a dose of stimulant to neutralize the sedative. The effect was almost instantaneous, like rebooting a computer. She pushed herself up, taking a deep breath and blinking quickly as her brain came back online.

“Sorry, Hux, I…” their interaction was already fading from her memory as she came to. “What did I say?”

“Nothing pleasant, as I’ve come to expect from you.”

“Oh, good.” She thought she was going to throw up for a moment, and stumbled as she rushed to stand. He caught her before she fell.

“Augh, sorry. I haven’t used it in a while. Nightmares. I can’t sleep.” she shook her head, as if it would physically clear the cobwebs from her brain; the motion making her dizzy again and causing...
her to fall into him.

“Give it a minute.” He put his arms around her shoulders and held her, resting his cheek on the top of her head. He closed his eyes and relished the moment, knowing such softness wouldn’t happen again.

“You smell good” she mumbled without thinking. She loved the smell of him- mint, tea, and soap. It made her heart ache.

He slowly peeled her off him and grimaced. “You smell like you’d be best suited for a shower.” He let her lean on him as he lead her to the refresher.

Once he was sure she was steady, he grabbed her by the jaw, pulling her face inches from his. “If you do anything this daft again, I will personally beat you within an inch of your life. You don’t have the luxury of being reckless.”

She smiled softly, no hint of animosity in her voice. “Is that so?”

“It is. I forbid it.” He released her and left without another word.

Her memory was muddled, but she was fairly sure he apologized to her. She had to give him credit; he held out longer than most people could. But then, he wasn’t ‘most people’. He was a self-serving, malicious, hateful thing; driven by spite and a rabid thirst call the galaxy to his heel- She wouldn’t have him any other way. And with all that he still cared for her, his actions defying his words. She allowed herself happiness at the thought.

Rey chased General Organa through the halls of the ship.

“You need me to go, especially if they’re both going to be there!”

“I told you already, Rey, absolutely not. This is so far off the books it’s on the floor hidden under a crate. If this is tied to us in any way, the repercussions would be disastrous.”

“Then why are we doing it? I know you’re the general, and you know more about these things than me, but if we’re going to do this we need to do it right. That means having someone there who can use the force too.”

“If this does go ‘right’, then them using the force won’t have anything to do with it.”

Rey ran up grabbed her arm to stop her, speaking low “So that’s it then, you’re just going to kill your son?”

She sighed, tired eyes set with a stern resolve. “My son has been dead for years, Rey, you need to drop it. This is a rare opportunity, and we’re taking it.”

“Why don’t we do what Poe said, and attack their ship before they arrive?”

“No offense to Mister Dameron, but his last plan got people killed and decimated our fleet. They would be on us the second we opened fire. End of discussion. The Resistance needs this victory desperately; it could completely change the tide of the war.”
Rey let her go and slumped against a wall, at a loss for what to do. She felt helpless.

“How are you doing this?”

She startled at the familiar voice, and saw Kylo standing down the hall, looking around.

“I didn’t do anything. You must have felt me. I think that’s how this works.”

“Ah, so you’re on a ship. We’ve been looking for a new base this whole time.”

She was exasperated. “I’m trying to save you and you’re still trying to kill my friends?”

“I told you I don’t need saving. How old is this ship? It looks ancient.”

“You do, Ben. More than you know, you… you giant ass!”

“Ah. There seems to be a recurring theme for today. Good to see I can’t win regardless of what side I’m on.” Just as he disappeared, Leia came rushing around the corner.

Rey whipped around, back straight “General?”

Her brow was furrowed, eyes searching the air, confused. She clearly had felt his presence, and Rey felt lower than low for still keeping their bond a secret. “I… nothing… nevermind…”

“I was talking to myself, I hope it didn’t echo, ha.” she laughed nervously and turned quickly walk in the opposite direction. She went to go find Finn- if anyone could distract her it was him, and she was desperate need of it.

- Chapter End Notes

I've scoured the internet, and it's not conclusive whether or not Hux & Co know about Kylo Ren's true lineage, so I'm going with that they don't.

Seeing how it coming out that Vader was Leia's grandfather ruined her for awhile in Bloodlines, I'd imagine that they'd want to keep his Skywalker dna on the down low. Pretty sure Snoke was the only one who knew and since he's dead, yeah.
Blood on My Name

Chapter Summary

Kylo has a few words with Ichara before sending her off with Hux.

Rey & Kylo have an unusual conversation, as does Rey & Rose.
Rey gets to see his apprentice for the first time- the repercussions of which aren't yet apparent.

The bargain Hux *does* end up making on Canto Bight is nothing what he expected to gain from the night.

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This is a long chapter for me, but I couldn't find anywhere to split it, and I suck at summaries :P

I hope you like it, I had fun writing it!

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ichara lurked around her quarters the remainder of the day, waiting till the last minute to get dressed for the obnoxious evening ahead. She begrudgingly chose the robes Kylo gave her, paired with one of the overly ornate Cantonican robes her cousin had sent her with. It was a heavy black velvet, embroidered with red designs around the edges- the least garish thing the Baroness has packed.

Failing to do anything intricate with her hair, she simply pinned two small buns in the back, leaving long tendrils loose to frame her face. Carbonite shadow was blacker than black, and she even found the yellow contrast of her own eyes disconcerting. Still not fond of showing her face everywhere, she was grateful for the heavy hood of the robe. A small, unopened crate sat in the corner her bedroom. She stared at it, biting her lip, before deciding to open it.

It was a noticeably older and looked out of place against the sleek surroundings. It held jewelry and other trinkets that she had neither time or nor occasion to wear. Her favorite was an elaborate collared necklace, hanging from it a chandelier of midnight diamonds and red pearls from the depths of the obliterated planet Anaxes, interwoven with threads of songsteel. A rare, difficult metal to work with, it was generally reserved for only the finest of weapons. Given her family’s proud military lineage, her grandfather commissioned it as the perfect heirloom piece for her grandmother, gifted on their wedding day.

Just because something is beautiful doesn’t mean it can’t be strong. It was one of the last things her father told her before he sent them away.

He’d told her specifically not to go through the chest, but sure enough he found her hiding in the cargo hold of their ship, adorned in everything she could fit on her little figure. The necklace draped down almost to her belly button and he couldn’t help but laugh. She was young- five or six-
memories from back then blurred together. He patiently removed them one by one, telling a story with each piece before placing it back in the chest.

“Fuck I hate opening this thing.” Her voice wavered when confronted with the past, usually kept locked away.

She tucked two ornate hair combs into her hair- the fiery red opals that studded them glowed despite the low light. They were mined on Kallistas, a place her grandfather loved; at least that’s what she had been told. He was killed before she was born. She ran her thumb over a blank space in the center, remembering when her mother had the family crest milled away after her father was slain. Doing the best she could to erase who they were, she frantically ransacked everything that might tip someone off - everything except what was hidden in a secret drawer in the bottom. She popped it out, running her fingers along an insignia badge with 9 pips. Three blue, three yellow, three blue, three red.

“The Resistance almost took everything. They left this badge, and they left me. Their mistake.” She whispered aloud, it as if communing with the ghosts.

“And I will take from them as they have taken from me.”

The killer, the general, and her fleet.

She put everything back save the cascading strands of steel and pearls. She had usually attended these events to work, and while she still wanted to remain sensible should something happen, it would be entertaining to dress like one of ‘them’ for a change. It would be a lie to say showing off for Hux wasn’t part of the reason, too.

She mumbled curses to herself as she fumbled with the ornate clasps at the back, and jumped when she felt leather-clad hands on hers.

“Let me.”

Ichara slowly lowered her hands, pushing the chest under the bed with her foot. She hadn’t seen Kylo since the incident. Once the irrational fury had cooled, she was horrified with her reckless behavior and worried what his reaction would be.

“There.” he turned her around to face him and took a hand to tilt her chin to the side, searching her face for marks. His bottom lip was swollen and split down the middle. She thought about healing him, but didn’t. Let every breath remind him of me.

“I won’t tell anyone... about what I saw.”

“I know you won’t. You could have told Hux when he took you. It would have been the perfect time to betray me, and you didn’t.”

“Why are you here?”

“To make sure you are presentable.” He ran a finger over the bezel in the front of her necklace. “And you are.” His other hand found her hip, and started gradually sliding up, over her stomach, lingering over her breast, running a finger along her collar bone. She swallowed nervously, his overly calm demeanor unsettling. Sure enough, the other hand reached her neck, and he slowly wrapped both hands around her throat. The pressure intensified with every word he spoke, and he pulled upwards
until she was on her toes, struggling to stand. The stones on her necklace cut into her, but she refused to give him the satisfaction of a reaction.

“I also... wanted to let you know... that if you ever... do anything like that again ... I will kill you. You will be dead. Do you understand me?” He held her for a moment, jaw muscles flexing as he glared down at her.

“Yes… Sup...reme... Leader…” She was desperate for air, but did her best to downplay it.

He squeezed even tighter, leaning down, “I told you... when we’re alone... to call me Kylo.” His lips hovered in front of her breathless mouth before softly kissing her. She knew him to be violent, but didn’t think he had the capacity for blatant cruelty. He kissed her deeper, still holding tight, and not till she was on the edge of panic did he pull away and release her.

“Now come, it’s time to go.” Blood rushed to her head, and stars danced at the edge of her vision as she gasped for air. Her knees buckled beneath her but she caught herself on the door frame, clinging to it.

He raised an eyebrow, voice velveteen as he taunted her. “Is everything alright?” She had the urge to strike him again, but was half afraid he just might kill her first.

They walked together in silence to the hangar where Hux, always early, was already waiting. His eyes lingered on Kylo’s purpled lip, and his mouth twisted in the fight to keep a smile from his face.

He glared and said nothing, shouldering the General as he pushed passed him. Hux was entirely too pleased with the situation to let his childish intimidation tactics get under his skin.

The Finalizer had moved in a closer proximity to Canotonica so the flight didn’t take long. Most of it was made in awkward silence as they sat across from each other. She didn’t know where they stood after this morning, and he wasn’t sure if she remembered his stilted attempt at an apology. The hood of her robe low set low, her mouth the only part of her face not hidden in shadow. He couldn’t read her face and he shifted uncomfortably, unsure of where she was looking.

“Is there a particular reason you have that thing over your face? You’re not still high, are you?” Excellent opening statement. Is it so difficult to be kind?

His own mind retorted back at his train of thought with a resounding ‘Yes’

She pulled it back and his heart caught in his throat at the sight of her. She looked all the part of a villainous queen from the fairy tales his mother would read to him. He always preferred them to the flaxen princesses, and it was a favor that still clearly stuck with him.

“I regret to inform you that I am painfully sober.”

“Stars, just look at you... if it weren’t for your charming demeanor I’d think there was an impostor sitting across from me.”

*You just can’t help yourself, can you.*

NO.

She laughed— an actual, pleasant laugh, and Hux fiddled with his glove nervously. Hope rose in his chest and he didn’t know what to do with it.
“Did you ever consider that I may wear that hood set low so I don’t have to look at those around me?”

“Ah, well I’m glad to see you’re feeling better, then. Your death would have been incredibly inconvenient.”

“I suppose then you would have had to take Kylo Ren as your date. I’m surprised you didn’t off me yourself in that case.”

He couldn’t help but blush. “Firstly, political business is hardly a date, and second, I’d take a Hutt before I had to take that feral man anywhere.”

“I’d rather take the malfunctioning droid that almost burned down the caf. At least that has an off button.”

“From my understanding that malfunctioned as well, and they had to toss it into the compactor.”

“I don’t remember anything explicitly stating we can’t throw people down there too. How convenient.”

“It certainly is something to keep in mind for the future.”

And just like that it was back. Before the suspicion and mind games ruined it, before he’d gone and ran her off, before they were pitted against each other. It wasn’t just the intimacy they shared that left him wanting- he’d missed his friend.

“What is it you think your cousin really wants with this?”

“Likely some sort of favor. She still thinks he’s coming, probably wanted to show off her connections.”

“She has no idea how lucky she is to have us instead of him.”

“She really doesn’t, the foolish woman is fixated on him.”

When they landed the Baroness rushed out to meet them, visibly crestfallen at the lack of their Supreme Leader.

“Oh don’t look like that, Ru. It would be a tactical disaster to have us both on planet at the same time.”

“I’m afraid you’ll have to settle for the mere General of the First Order, I hope you can make do.” It was bad enough he had to attend, he at least expected her to be grateful he’d even come at all.

“General Hux, you wonderful man, you know I didn’t mean it like that! It’s just... I had something for specifically for him. Oh well.”

Ichara launched herself towards her cousin, “Ru, what did you do? You tell me now, what did you have for him?”

“Calm down, dear, it’s not that serious. I’m aware of his fondness for that Jakku girl and I, well,
made some arrangements."

She sighed in relief “Sorry, he’s temperamental is all. Not someone you want to get anything for, let alone be in the same room with.”

“Oh you just don’t like anyone, do you. Now come, there are many inside quite eager to meet you both.”

Ichara rolled her eyes and hooked the General’s arm in her own as they followed behind her together.

“What was she talking about?”

Ichara snickered “Apparently she went through the trouble to find a girl from Jakku for our Supreme Leader. I can only imagine how that would have gone over.”

Hux almost retorted “But he has you.” Things had finally gotten better and he wasn’t about to let his snide remarks or flares of temper get the best of him. I’m not Kylo Ren, I have more control than that.

Everyone went silent when they entered the hall. Hux never got tired of being reminded of his station. It was easy to forget in the grinding routine of work aboard the ship, especially when the ‘Supreme Leader’ treated everyone like dirt beneath his heel.

But here they were, the General of the most fearsome military force with the only other dark force user in all the galaxy on his arm. He came to appreciate her more in this moment, as if he had something rare and exotic all to himself. His eyes scanned the room, and he said nothing, only nodding to give them permission to carry on. The Baroness put a hand on his shoulder and ushered him over to an obnoxiously gold-clad Twi’lek “You absolutely must meet Kal-Stich…”

He gave Ichara a look of helplessness as she released him. “Oh, you’re on your own, dear General.”

Kylo was sulking in his library, flipping through an old Sith book, trying to see what she found so interesting in them. The grammar didn’t translate well, and what he could make out seemed to be akin to riddles. Snoke had taught him what he needed to know and never made him resort to studies in this manner.

Rey appeared before him, her voice shattering the silence. “Ben! You’re… you’re in your library.”

He didn’t move, only glancing up with his eyes. “Astute observation.”

“Stars, Ben, what happened to your face?” The injury wasn’t that bad when it was fresh, but the bruise had settled in to a deep purple, and the cut kept splitting open as he’d absentmindedly to go bite his lip when lost in thought. It irritated him throughout the day, drawing his mind back to the various punishments he was dreaming up for her. Today was gratifying, but rage still simmered inside him. He wasn’t done yet.

“What happened to you leaving me alone?”
“I, um, I thought something had happened. And, I thought it was bad, so, I came to, uh, make sure that the bad thing didn’t happen, and that you were alright.”

He narrowed his eyes and closed the book. “You’re a terrible liar.”

“Well, you’re just plain terrible, so there’s that.”

He rose slowly, maintaining eye contact as he moved. “What are you not telling me?”

“Why aren’t you telling me what happened to your face?”

“My apprentice. Why are you acting like this?”

Rey’s eyes widened. “Did she turn on you?”

“No, if anything she proved her loyalty.” He stepped till he was standing over her. “What. Are you not. Telling me.”

“Not even two seconds ago you were angry with me for being here, and now you want to talk to me?” she folded her arms and stared defiantly up at him. “Maybe-” she disappeared mid sentence. He slunk back to his chair, randomly glancing up, expecting her to appear again at any time.

“Rey, who are you talking to?”

Rose’s voice pulled her back to the ship. She had gone down to one of the store rooms for a coilpack when she heard Rey in one of the closets holding what appeared to be a one-sided conversation.

“Sorry, I was, you know, practicing, um, things to say to people.”

“About... their face?”

“Yes, about their face. I’ve got to go do that right now, actually, sooooo” she pushed past Rose and hurried away to the bridge. They were monitoring the team sent to the surface, and she was relieved that Kylo hadn’t gone after all. Now she wanted to know who went, and how exactly their plan was going to turn out.

“What have I missed?”

Everyone was crowded around the holo projector table. One of the soldiers had brought a camera to record who was in attendance.

“Well I’m not surprised to see familiar faces, unfortunately.” They did their best to buy from arms dealers who were loyal solely to the Resistance, and it saddened General Organa to see people she considered friends vying for business from the First Order.

“Where is, um, their leader?” She still wasn’t entirely sure what to call him in front of everyone else, and it hurt her heart to call him ‘Kylo Ren.’

“He’s not present, it seems General Hux went in his place. In a way this is better. It’s been said that he is the one truly in command of their military. Killing him would be cutting the head off the snake”

Rey jabbed her finger into one of the figures standing beside Hux “Is that her?”
“Yes” Leia sighed “It would seem that the rumors of him taking an apprentice might be true. Whether she’s actually force-sensitive or not we don’t know, but she definitely looks the part.”

Poe snorted and elbowed Rey “It’s like every day is a funeral for them, no wonder they’re so grumpy. Not really stealthy dressing in all that get up, either”

“I don’t think they much have to care if they’re recognized or not.” she replied in an awestruck voice, and a some of the Resistance huddled around the table looked at her, perplexed. Rey was mesmerized by the dark figure, and without asking hit the zoom button. “I can almost… wait, where are they going?”

Hux had grabbed her arm and was rushing to leave.

Leia creased her brow in concern. “Tell them to stay in position, we don’t know for a fact that our cover has been blown. We can’t pull out now, not yet.”

As General of the First Order, the guests were falling over themselves to get the chance at a piece of the war machine. Conflict was profitable, and every sentient being in that room was more than ready to do anything to get in on it. The Baroness had left him after a time and disappeared to drift around other social circles, no doubt crowing about her ‘friends in high places’. The faces and names of the people courting him were beginning to blur together as the night wore on, when she popped up to pull him from the monotony.

“Forgive me, I need to steal the General for a moment.” She walked him away from the crowd where they could speak privately. “I’m glad to see you are doing so well, dear. I’ve missed you.”

Her overly saccharine demeanor left a bitter taste in his mouth. “I am doing as well as can be expected. Tell me, Orgida, what is it you want from all this?”

“My cousin was right, you are a sharp one. My financial interests have been expanding for some time, but I’m limited in my current station. I think I’d be better suited as a senator, don’t you think?” She winked and leant in close “And wouldn’t it be convenient if that pesky neutrality was done away with?”

“I won’t disagree with you, but I don’t know what you expect me to do about it.”

Ichara had been hovering in a corner, watching over the event. It was an ornate ballroom with a high ceiling, large windows on one wall covered with flowing drapes that reached the floor, to the wall beside it were balconies that overlooked the sea. It was just big enough to make her uncomfortable. Old habits died hard and she was still very much the guard, following Hux’s every move. A handful of people brazen enough came to speak to her, but since she wasn’t holding the check book, she was of little interest. They considered her more of a curiosity than a concern. Every creature in that room circled Hux, vying for his attention, and she watched in amusement. When the Baroness pulled him to the side, though, she sighed and made her way over. She didn’t trust her motives and didn’t want Hux getting involved in one of her ridiculously elaborate schemes.

“Ru, these people are all vultures and I want to decapitate half of them. Your ‘friends’ are scum, but I can’t pretend I’m surprised.”

The Baroness laughed. She was sure that Ichara would come running if she pulled him aside, and
she was right. Since her cousin ruined her plan regarding the Resistance and Kylo, she decided to return the favor by ruining something for Ichara.

“Well I know where you got that temper from, my father was always saying what a saint his sister was. Your father was well known for his fondness of violence. One could almost say notorious, in fact.”

Hux went rigid and his eyes snapped up at the Baroness, muscles in his face tightening as he clenched his jaw.

Ichara’s breath caught in her throat and she thought she was going to throw up. Her words were a punch in the chest. “Ruxinn, a word, please.”

His hand shot out and grabbed her arm in a vice-like grip. “Family ties are such strange things, aren’t they. It looks as if Ichara and I both got our father’s dispositions. Strange that you would take your mother’s last name?”

“Oh, has she been?” The Baroness remarked with over-done surprise.

The blood drained from the her face and she was frozen, mind racing, searching for a way to skirt this, but coming up empty handed. Ichara was cursing her cousin, half wondering if she was truly petty enough to try and get her killed.

“If you don’t mind, Baroness, I need to have a word with the apprentice.”

“Oh, of course not, dear, take your time.” She smiled and made eye contact with Ichara as she bowed her head. You bitch.

He dragged her out and down one of the long halls till he came upon a closet to duck into. He got steadily angrier with every step as the depth of her deceptions sunk in.

She started pleading as soon as the doors closed. “Hux, please, I-”

He whipped her in the face with his blaster and booted her in the stomach. She grunted and stumbled backwards, falling to the floor. “You have been lying to me this whole time.” he snarled “Tell me why I shouldn’t kill you right now.” He was visibly shaking from the effort of trying to keep his voice hushed.

She pushed herself up to her knees, and held her hands up in surrender, blood weeping from the corner of her mouth where the blaster connected. Her voice was slow and measured as she stared up at him from the floor “Hux, please, I will tell you, but you can’t tell anyone. Please. There are people who would not stop at anything to see me dead.”

“And would I be one of those people?”

“I- I don’t know, I don’t think so.” she stammered.

The lone light in the ceiling slipped behind him as he advanced on her, leaving him a looming, dark silhouette staring down. He traced her face with the cold metal tip of his weapon, struggling to keep his hand steady. Things had been fixed between them for naught more than a couple hours before they were ruined again. All of it made him absolutely furious.
“Let’s find out then, shall we?”

He moved his finger to the trigger, dragging the blaster between her lips before centering the muzzle on her forehead.

“Who are you? Resistance scum?”

“No, my last name is Teshik, I’m Adrestia Ichara Teshik. I swear I couldn’t tell anyone, it’s the truth.”

“As in-”

“Osvald Teshik was my grandfather. There was an incident, and after that he sent my grandmother and my father to the Outer Rim, fearing for their safety. We had to hide- there’s been a bounty on my family since the fall of the Empire.”

Hux took a few steps back at this new information. The light illuminated his features again, and she could see the wide-eyed surprise on his face. “Your grandfather was an Imperial war hero, one of Palpatine’s original twelve Grand Admirals, why would you lie about your lineage? That would-”

“And what did it get him?” she cut him off, the anger she’d carried all her life creeping to the surface. “It got him an execution. And my family? Death. Fear. It got us hunted by the Republic and Senators with axes to grind. Our estate burned, our family chased from Anaxes. Even in the darkest corners of the galaxy they came for us.”

She rose slowly to stand. “His execution wasn’t enough, they wanted to erase us from existence. They never stopped. I was training to be a Jedi when I was young- laughable I know- and when General Organa’s son ruined that, I returned home to find my mother dead. I am the last Teshik left, and I have dedicated my life to rising again- to restoring our name to its deserved glory.”

“It was my understanding that the Solo boy was dead?”

“He’s not, but he’s going to be.” She approached him slowly as she spoke, bootheels clicking the ground were a cadence to her words “Your instincts serve you well, Hux, you were right all along. I did have ulterior motives. The baroness didn’t pay me anything- I paid her to get a position on your ship. After years of training and dreaming of vengeance, the opportunity presented itself.”

She stopped once her face was inches away from his. He stared down at her, starstruck and breathless.

“You and I, we want the same thing. Princess Leia and her precious Resistance are directly responsible for the destruction of my family. Let me destroy them with you-I want nothing more in the entire galaxy. I promise my loyalty to you forever if you'll help me.”

Hux swore he had never heard more beautiful words leave a woman’s lips. His response was a split above a breath.

“Yes.”

For a moment they stood motionless, staring at each other like time itself was suspended. The spell broke as they crashed together, assaulting each other with their twisted affections. He pinned her against the wall, the taste of blood in his mouth fueling the fire within. Writhing like two predators
vying for the same prey, she slipped his greatcoat off his shoulders and he pulled at the layers of her robes, salacious whispers escaping any time their mouths parted.

_Hux... take me... fuck..._

_You.... are mine, beast... mine... all mine..._

_Prove it... ah... prove it, general...._

He growled at the challenge and cursed at the many layers keeping him from taking what was his.

A moment of frustrated clarity glinted through the lust-filled haze.

“Damnit. We don’t have time for that, Hux” She spun him around and shoved his back into the wall “Fear not,” she kissed down his neck, “for you have a wise ally, General Hux, Sir.” She nipped his neck before effortlessly flicking open his belt buckle and falling to her knees.

The sight of one of the most powerful women he’d ever met kneeling before his cock made him almost come on the spot. He gasped as she slowly worked her tongue along the prominent vein underneath, staring up at him with lidded eyes before lapping the precum off his tip with teasing flicks of her tongue. He shuddered at the sensation. She looked up to make eye contact, holding him on the tip of her tongue, before burying him into her throat.

‘Chara... fuck... yes... yes, my beast... stars... yes yes yes.....

Leather chirped against steel as his fingertips dug into the metal wall, half out of sheer ecstasy and half in an attempt to support himself. His legs shook and his knees began to weaken as she lavished him with her tongue. It didn’t take long, and his hips started to buck into her on their own as he reached orgasm.

His hand flew to his mouth and he bit down hard as he came, trying to stifle the strangled cry as he pressed into the back of her throat. She continued to work on his length, moving slowly, gently guiding him back down.

When he finally opened his eyes, she was standing in the light, looking pleased as she wiped a bloody mixture of fluids from her chin.

The knock at the door couldn’t have been more perfectly timed, and he rushed to regain a sense of composure.

“Ah, General Hux, sir? Is everything alright?”

“The General and I are discussing a security matter. We will be out shortly. Be sure to let Baroness Orgida know that the concern she brought to our attention has been taken care of.” She didn’t know Hux like Ichara did, and her cousin had no idea how her little plan had utterly and completely backfired. Someone knowing her secret was freeing, but it was more than that- he didn’t know just know, he’d promised to help her. Her heart soared.

“Yes Ma’am.”

She retrieved his greatcoat, tossed carelessly to the floor, and placed it back over his shoulders.
“I look forward to working with you, General Hux, sir.”

He’d found his voice, slightly raspy as he tried to catch his breath, “As do I, Teshik”

“You can’t tell anyone, that has to-”

“Shh, don’t worry.” he grinned, pulling her to him and nuzzling into her neck “I know that name is only for me.”

His face was bore an unnaturally pleasant expression as they returned to the event, both ablaze with a newfound resolve. Before they re-entered the great hall, he leant over her shoulder and whispered “I promise you, beast, we will burn the Resistance to the ground- and I will fuck you in their ashes” He could hear her a draw ragged breath as the doors opened. They’d gotten no more than ten feet in the room when she heard another whisper- but it wasn’t from Hux.

_I can feel her._

Her arm shot out across his chest to hold him back, her eyes searching the room.

_She’s… worried._

“She, something’s wrong.”

Chapter End Notes

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I wanted for her ancestry to make some sort of sense canonically, and when I was researching characters to see if one already in existence might fit- my plans for her incidentally had heavy parallels with Osvald Teshik (I made up his family though). I think he was wonderfully done, and I love the sadness of his character. While Rey seems to be a break from “the sins of the father” that tend to follow blood lines in Star Wars, I really liked keeping that same theme with Ichara. I hope you all like it. There have been small hints as to her conflict with the entirety of the resistance and Ben’s family, so I hope this doesn’t seem to come totally out of left field.

Everything is going to speed up after this :P
Amidst Wolves

Chapter Summary

Ichara proves her loyalty to Hux, Kylo gets put on the spot about Rey, and Hux just generally enjoys giving people a bad time.

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A collective sigh of relief was heard across the Resistance bridge when Hux & Ichara reappeared into view.

Rey’s eyes locked back onto the black robed figure beside the General. “I can feel her!” everyone was silent, their attention fixed on Rey. “She’s worried.”

Leia tapped the comm, “If you’re in position, do it now, we don’t have time to wait.”

- Hux frowned, his hand moving to hover over his blaster. “What do you mean?”

“The guards at the doors, they’re gone... and something… I don’t know I just feel it. Stay with me, I’m going to skim the room.” She closed her eyes, their thoughts the same typical greed and manipulation. Suddenly, something different emerged at the edge of her consciousness-she could see herself and the General through someone else’s eyes. Someone above them, adjusting the sight on a rifle.

Ichara shrugged her heavy robe off and grabbed her saber in one fluid motion, spinning to the right to deflect a blaster bolt. Guests screamed and fell to the floor, their own personal security details rushing to cover them. She clawed out her hand and ripped a plainclothes fighter from the balcony, landing in a heap on the floor. More popped up on the other two balconies, one of them skimming Hux’s shoulder with a bolt, burning him through his coat. She snarled like an animal as she yanked the man from the balcony, forcibly smashing him onto the tile below. More came to the railings, and she deflected the bolts back the best she could, using her left hand to force others to the side.

“Shes amazing” Rey whispered, mesmerized by the fire fight. It was in poor taste, but Rey was excited to see another force user- after all, she hadn’t met many. She was lowered into her fighting stance, saber a crimson blur as it returned fire. She couldn’t make out the woman’s face before the camera feed was cut by one of Hux’s shots taking the soldier out. The feed worked long enough to show him tumbling over the edge, the sickening sound of bones crunching upon landing.

Poe wrapped his arm around Leia’s shoulders as she put a hand to her mouth, staring down at the now blank projector screen.

“Hey, they’re still going. We don’t know that it’s over yet.”

The sounds of blaster fire mingled with screams still played over the speakers.
Hux pulled his blaster and was firing over her left shoulder, picking them off with expert precision despite his injury. The Baroness was shouting over a comm link and her own guards finally rushed into the room, unleashing a barrage up at the rebel fighters. As quickly as it started, it was done. She spun around and grabbed Hux, examining the burn on his shoulder.

“Stars, are you alright? Hold on.” she held her hand over his wound to force heal it, but focus was difficult. She was trembling from the adrenaline rushing through her. Protecting Hux was different than the work she was accustomed to- she never had a personal affinity for any of her clients, and found herself slightly shaken.

He pulled back, irritated. “I’m fine. What in the hell was that?!?”

“Ru had something to do with this. I’m going to kill her.” The pair stalked over to the Baroness who was already rushing over to them as the remaining guests ran for the door.

“I’m so glad you’re alright! I’m so-hck!” She choked her cousin and dragged her over to them with the force.

“You set this up. You knew this was going to happen!”

“I- I can explain! I thought- I thought they would bring the Jakku girl! It was a trap, f-for her! For Kylo Ren! I thought, if I brought her to him, he would help me!” She released her and Ruxinn fell to her knees, gasping. “It wasn’t supposed to go like this, they weren’t supposed to do anything if he wasn’t here!”

Ichara crouched down in front of her kneeling cousin, “You are more of a self-absorbed idiot than I thought. That’s not how Kylo Ren works. I told you I was handling it. I told you to wait.”

In the commotion, one of the Resistance fighters had grabbed ahold of one of the long drapes and slid down, hiding behind the heavy swathes of fabric. He stepped out from behind the curtain and aimed his blaster at the General.

“We will not be intimidated by you!”

Ichara’s eyes snapped up and she reflexively leapt upwards to cover him. There was a crackle as she fell to her knees and froze in place. Hux killed the fighter a flourish and looked down, horrified at the sight before him. Her hands were clawed around a glowing blaster bolt, the crackling beam embedded half way into her torso. With a guttural cry she forced it out of her and sent it flying off into a column before collapsing to the ground.

Refusing to trust the Baroness any further, Hux had her carried back to the ship, barking commands to have medical staff ready for their return. She was in a trance, hands clutching the oozing wound as she did her best to heal what she could. The Finalizer shot into orbit in a matter of seconds, looming ominously above in the night sky. Using what little effort she had left she fought against being put in the bacta tanks, so Hux had her placed in a private room at the back of the medical bay. Med droids scamped across her, removing singed flesh and placing carbon bandages like they were spinning a web across the hole in her stomach.

After having his own wounds treated he had a clean uniform brought to the medical bay rather than leaving. He remained by her side, feelings of guilt swirled amongst the anger and frustration. Given
her history of sedative abuse she was devastatingly resistant to the effect of painkillers, as evidenced by the staccato of gasps throughout the procedure. In her semi-lucid state she held her hand out weakly, searching for his. He stood beside her stoically as she dug her nails into the palm of his glove, rubbing her thumb against his knuckles as if she needed constant reassurance he was there.

The hour was late, and Hux accidentally fell asleep in the chair by her bed, fallen asleep on folded arms beside her.

“Leave us.”

Hux jumped awake to see Kylo’s frame darkening the doorway. He waited outside the room, rubbing the crick in his neck, wishing it was Kylo in that bed with a hole burned in him instead. He pondered how easy it would be to override a droid to administer a lethal dose of sedative. Fate seemed to always pluck his archenemy just out of harm’s way- this would have been the closest he’d have been to death since the incident on Starkiller.

Well, and my foolish hesitation in the throne room.

Kylo held his hand over the middle of her, attempting to try and force heal but doing poorly. She arched her back with a ragged gasp, as if a hook had grabbed her sternum and yanked her towards the ceiling, before falling back onto the bed, awake. She stared up wild eyed, panting from the pain.

“Good. You’re awake.” He reached up to run gloved finger tips down her jaw line, slowly moving her face to look at him. “I am so disappointed in you.”

“Th-that’s not fair” the words were barely a whisper “They… both of us… I lived…”

A tear leaked from the corner of her eye, and he wiped it away with his thumb.

“If life was fair, where would we be? I expected more from you than this. We will discuss it later.” He left without saying anything more. Hux hadn’t gone, and Kylo stopped when he saw him, running his eyes along the bandage peeking over the collar of his uniform. “The vulnerability you both displayed embarrassed the First Order today.”

Hux ground his teeth, and though he knew the argument was not one he would win, he couldn’t help himself.

“The only embarrassment we suffered was that you were too afraid to make an appearance, leaving Ichara and I to fend for an assassination attempt meant for the both of you. You should be grateful the two of us are even here!” he shouted, deciding it was worth being thrown across the room to make his point.

Kylo stared at him for a moment, but rather than lashing out he turned and left in silence, leaving Hux to be angry by himself.

He returned to the room to see her awake, shifting uncomfortably while staring up at the ceiling and muttering.

“Ichara, you’re going to be fine. You did wonderfully last night.”

“Armitage…” her hand moved up to grab his forearm as if she were making a smuggler’s deal. “I am going to kill him. I told you I would, and I’m going to, I promise.”
He laughed softly, “I appreciate the sentiment, I too-” His sentence was interrupted as she rolled to her side and cried out in pain, propping herself up to manage bursts of words between panting.

“This is… going to sound... strange... I need... Bring me a prisoner.” she stared into the palm of her hand as she slowly clenched it into a fist “I need to try something. Please. Trust me.”

He wasn’t too sure how much he could trust her in her current state, but he had a captured resistance fighter brought to the bay. When he returned to the room there was fresh blood on the blankets. She’d taken the carbon bandages and yanked them out, laying in bloody ribbons on the floor.

Before he could say anything she snaked out her hand and the prisoner shot towards her, right hand dug into his neck. He went rigid, and Hux could have sworn the air rippled around her like a heatwave. The prisoner twitched before he fell to the floor- dead.

She collapsed back onto the bed with a sigh. Her injury looked more like a deep laceration than a blaster wound, surrounded by scar tissue that would have taken weeks to form. “I-I can’t do anymore. The force… I’m drained…” He stepped over the body to run his hand down her stomach.

“I’ve never seen the force do anything like this before.”

“Well I’m not like anything you’ve seen before” she smiled as she drifted into sleep.

He summoned a trooper to discreetly dispose of the body, wanting to keep this from Kylo Ren. Though she was asleep, he still whispered to her before he left. “I’ll take care of everything. We’re in this together; you promised, beast.”

Hux stalked down the halls, thrilled about the suffering he was about to bring down around him. The bloodlust writhed in his chest like a nest of adders and the gears in his mind were set to overdrive===; he almost felt high. Not even the Supreme Leader would be safe from his wrath.

- After checking on her guests and sending out groveling apologies, the Baroness had retreated to the back office in her place of business; more to hide after the catastrophe of the evening than work. She tapped her nails on the desk, digging the depths of her mind for a way to right this. She was fairly sure she could talk Ichara down, but seeing as Hux apparently took the news of her family well, he was likely off the table. It was common knowledge what a vicious man he was- something she had witnessed first hand- and she was more afraid of him at the moment than anything else.

Annoyed, she decided to take her anger out on those who had ‘failed’ her, flipping a vocoder switch to disguise her voice before angrily punching their code in.

“General Organa, we have a comm coming through from Canto Bight, it’s our contact.”

“Put them through, there may be some good news for us yet.” It had been radio silence since the soldier had fallen from the balcony. No news had come planetside for them, and everyone hovered in the bridge, worried. The First Order would take time to craft a story before releasing any news, and whatever they did say about the goings on would be more propaganda than truth. It had been hours since the ambush and their still silence gave the Resistance hope that they suffered a heavy blow.

“Words cannot accurately express how completely mortified I am at the embarrassing display you put on tonight. If you had any idea who I was, and any idea what repercussions I could face for this,
Leia put a hand to her temple, closing her eyes as she sighed. “Well you promised us Kylo Ren—without him we may not even have entered this agreement, so don’t consider yourself the only one let down. What happened this evening? We lost contact.”

“It’s a good thing he wasn’t there! It would have been wholesale slaughter!” She paced around her office, gesticulating dramatically to the empty room. “His apprentice is half dead from a bolt to the stomach, General Hux took a hit to the shoulder and they still managed to kill them all. You have that force user girl, why didn’t you send her? What chance did those men have? Were you trying to get me killed?” She had hesitated before calling her guards in to the ballroom, waiting for Rey to show… and was absolutely seething when it was clear she wasn’t going to make an appearance.

“If she attended they would have known it was the Resistance. We’re going to claim it was a vigilante force. You and I both know that getting banned from Cantonica would be a blow to our cause, and neither of us want that.”

“You and your cause are not my problem right now! Not only could I likely be killed for this, but my informant aboard the ship is now in danger as well. You promised to kill them, but all you did was make them angry. I believe this relationship must come to an end.” she huffed indignantly, holding out that they may yet offer her something useful in return.

“I would make it up to you personally if I could, but I don’t know what to do. Your access to intelligence aboard the Finalizer could be helpful in the future, and I do hope that our allyship doesn’t have to end here.”

“I just want you to know, General Organa, that if I die, my blood is on your hands, not theirs.” she slapped the button to cut off communications and screeched like a banshee as she threw her holopad across the room. It had been so long since one of her elaborate stratagems had failed that she’d forgotten what failure even felt like. Her cousin was incredibly guarded when it came to her handling of Kylo Ren, and Ruxinn wondered if her impatience with Ichara might be what cost her the senate seat. Little did she know it would cost her much more than that.

Kylo was simply furious. Furious that they’d been attacked, furious they’d been injured, and furious for looking weak. As far as he was concerned, the evening was a victory for the Rebels. It wasn’t just the fury; there was a bit of sadness, too. Despite the years of separation and the death of his father, it still hurt that his mother actively plotted to kill him, though he had no reason to expect anything different. The sadness embittered itself into a rage that demanded to be satiated the only way he knew how—destruction.

He found himself in a control room on one of the lower decks, maiming everything in sight. When he was sufficiently exhausted he returned to his quarters, staring into the melted helmet of Darth Vader. Something didn’t sit right with him— it was strange that Hux had stayed by her side. The two couldn’t stand to be near each other, so his presence could only be explained by something of benefit to the General. He highly doubted the hateful man was suddenly touched by compassion. Perhaps something happened planetside he didn't want Kylo to know about, something he had to speak with Ichara about.

His brooding was interrupted by the buzz of his holopad— Hux requested his presence in his office. With no patience for games, he stormed through the corridors, flinging aside troopers who didn’t move out of his way fast enough. He paused for a moment upon entering, taken aback by the amount
of security inside the office. Hux had Phasma to his right with a pair of elite guards on each side. The smugness radiating from the General was almost suffocating.

“I’ll cut right to it. I need to ask you an important question, Supreme Leader. What is your relationship with the scavenger girl from Jakku? ”

“Excuse me, General?” Kylo did the best to keep his face a mask. His heart dropped into his stomach at the question, but he was also enraged that Hux thought he could dare question him like this. His arm twitched as he held it back- choking him right now would not bode well for his case.

“Illegal has informed me that the Resistance was alerted to our presence and granted access to the venue in order to trap her for you. Apparently as a “gift” Why would they think this? What interests do you have in her?”

“Sh-she killed Snoke, and she’s strong with the force- taking that advantage from the rebels would be a crushing blow. What are you insinuating, General?”

His gaze was sharp, like a fox that had followed the blood of a wounded rabbit and finally cornered its prey. ‘I’m not insinuating anything, Ren, but for whatever reason people are convinced of your infatuation with the girl. This is unacceptable and, how did you say it in the medbay, ah, an ‘embarrassment to the First Order’.”

He lunged towards him but stopped abruptly as the guards shifted, Phasma blatantly moving both hands to her blaster. He slowly stepped to the edge of the desk to loom over him. Hux stared up, doing the best he could to control the smile on his face, hands clasped in front of him.

“How different this is from our last encounter here- isn’t it, Ren.” he drawled, voice just low enough for the two to hear it. Hux stood slowly, almost eye level with the seething creature before him.

“Different? No, you’re doing what you have always done, Hux. Shifting the blame for your mistakes. You should be grateful that I consider the wound to your shoulder punishment enough for letting my apprentice fall in harm’s way. Capturing the scavenger would cripple the Resistance- perhaps it is you who should shift your priorities. Have we forgotten who our enemies are?”

Hux straightened his back, arctic eyes sparkling with contempt. “No, Supreme Leader, I don’t believe I have.” he let his words hang in the air before continuing. “We have located the spy, and I personally will be retrieving them from Canto Bight.”

“Good. If that is all, I have other matters to tend to.”

Unable to resist one last jab, Hux called out to him as he left “Oh, and Ren- your apprentice jumped in front of me, saving my life- you can’t fault me for that. I am incredibly grateful, though.” Kylo clenched his fists, doing everything he could not to lash out as he left.

Phasma sighed in exasperation as soon as the doors closed. “Alright, everyone out. I need a moment with the General.” the guards filed out to return to their post in the hallway. Once the doors closed Phasma removed her mask, thunking it on his desk.

“You know, I half way thought you got shot on purpose just to prove a point to me- I wouldn’t put it past you. You’re welcome for me rushing back as soon as I heard, by the way.”

“Phasma, you know I’m grateful for you. All things considered though, everything has worked out
quite favorably. Ichara and I have come to an… understanding”

“You finally apologized? About damn time. I told you that’s all you had to do.”

“It wasn’t just that- she has promised to assist me with our military endeavors.”

“Is that what you’re calling it now?”

Hux blushed as he crossed his arms. “That response wasn’t necessary. She has an axe to grind against General Organa, and may be the key to ridding ourselves of Kylo Ren.”

“You know I hate him too, Armitage, but that is a dangerous game to play. He’s not like the officers we’ve picked off.”

“I am well aware, and it’s the only reason I’ve suffered him this long. I must say she might be the only person on this ship that loathes him more than I do. Now go gather up your favorites- we have to go retrieve a treacherous whore from Canto Bight.”

The guards had alerted her to his presence, and she was already waiting for him in the sitting room where she entertained her guests, guards at her side.

“Ah, Baroness Ruxinn Orgida. What are we plotting on this fine evening?” She usually enjoyed the way rolled his r’s at the beginning of her name, but not tonight.

“General Hux, I assume this isn’t the business of pleasure as usual?”

He curled his lip at her obvious insinuations. “Make your guards stand down, we need to have a chat.”

She glared back at him, unmoving.

He held up his hand, two fingers raised. “I told you to stand down, gentlemen.”

The guards stood firm, weapons drawn.

Hux sighed dramatically and lowered his two fingers into his fist. Phasma stepped from behind him and killed all four in a fraction of a second. She was the only one he knew of quicker with a blaster than himself.

The Baroness leapt from her chair. “You-you can’t do this! This is outrageous! When they hear of you breaking the neutrality laws, and they will, the First Order will be banned from Cantonica!”

Hux laughed. “What are you talking about, Ru?” He emphasized his use of Ichara’s nickname for her. “I’m not here on First Order business, this is personal. Did you really think you could cross me without repercussions?”

"This is ridiculous, you are being ridiculous. Think with your head, not your heart, General. It's unbecoming of a man of your stature and may be something you regret later.”

At this, he stalked over and put his blaster underneath her chin. Her other guards shuffled nervously
but didn’t do anything to stop him.

“Are you threatening me?! I would have no qualms about pulling this trigger and sending your teeth flying through the back of your skull. The only reason I am not is because you are Ichara’s cousin. You should be more appreciative of your relatives in high places, Baroness.”

She narrowed her eyes, unphased. “This is not a game you want to play with me, General.”

He smiled with a cold, soulless grin. “Oh you’re quite right- this is a game you’ll play with Kylo Ren. You wanted to meet him so badly, and now you’ll get your chance. A word of warning, though, he’s rather cross with you.”

At this her eyes widened in horror “Wait, General, I, I can fix this, I-”

He holstered his blaster and grabbed her shoulder, shoving her to the ground.

“Cuff this bitch and bring her aboard, we’re done here”
The doctor was noticeably surprised at how quickly she’d healed herself, but then again the force did defy most sciences. After a few additional scans just to be sure of her well being, he released her. She looked for Hux, only to finally be told that he was planetside at Canto Bight. Ichara returned to her quarters and took a long shower, preparing to go begrudgingly meet Kylo Ren as he’d requested.

It took every ounce of self control Hux had not to put a bolt through Ruxinn’s head; between her pleading and threatening there was hardly a moment of silence on the return trip. He kept reminding himself that it would be worth it to see the look of joy on Ichara’s face at having her traitorous cousin as a plaything in the brig. The baroness was a gift, a token of thanks for her protection on Cantonica. Any other time such effort would have been with some self-serving manipulation behind it, but it would genuinely make him proud to please her. He almost felt foolish, but if everything she said was true, this was simultaneously a gift for a partner and proof of his dedication. After securing the prisoner Hux rushed back to the medbay to check on her progress. They almost ran into each other as they came around the same corner.

The pair froze, staring at each other, both somehow at a loss for words. So much had happened that there was almost too much to say.

“You meant what you said? On Canto Bight?” His voice was uncharacteristically soft, and he waited for an explanation of a lie; honestly believing it was too good to be true.

She took a step towards him, golden eyes staring into his with sincerity. "Hux... I meant every single word.”

He grabbed her face and kissed her right in the middle of the corridor. Two troopers that had just come around the corner stopped abruptly at the sight, one grabbing his partner and pulling him back, both quietly marching backwards.

“Let’s just go the other way for a bit. I don’t know what’s going on but it’s above my pay grade.”

She was surprised by the boldness but leant into his embrace; he was the one thing that was capable of overriding her senses. When the fervor passed he realized where they were and pulled away

“You’re entirely healed?”

“Yes, thanks to your assistance it went quicker than usual.”

“Good.” Without saying another word he grabbed her hand and pulled her down the hallway, dipping into the first closet they came upon.

She pulled him to her before the doors even closed, snips of conversation escaping whenever their mouths separated.
“Mmm, a closet you haven’t destroyed.”

“That was only once”

“Let’s keep it that way”

“Stars I missed you.”

“I know.”

She laughed “Conceited man.”

With a sweep of his arm he cleared off the top of a tall canister, pulling her over to sit on top of it. He separated her legs with his knee and put a hand on the wall behind her, leaning down to whisper, “The most powerful woman in the galaxy is mine. How could I not be?”

His free hand slipped between the folds of her robes and moved up her thigh, hissing at the slickness under his fingers. She pulled him closer to her, hiding her face in his chest to stifle a moan. Under the ego and the anger during their separation, there was an undeniable emptiness inside of her at his absence which only served to make her resent him even more. When she pressed into him it was both out of relief and the desire she’d been smothering inside herself.

He buried his face in her hair, breathing in the scent of her that he missed so much. She was a beast, and she was his.

“Where were you going?”

“Kylo Ren… he… he summoned me…”

Hux snarled and snapped the band to her lace undergarments as he ripped them over her knees. After a second of adjustment he thrust into her, her back arching at the feeling of him.

“You’re going to stand before him with the General of the First Order still hot between your legs” he snarled, hooking an arm under each leg and pulling her to him, his hips moving at a quickening pace. She let her head fall back, making no attempt to muffle the sounds he pulled from her. For being someone who couldn’t use the force the darkness seemed to live in his bones, wrapping its tendrils around her and sinking into every joint and every vein as he was inside her. It felt so... perfect... when they were together.

He trailed rough kisses down her exposed neck, one hand yanking at the top of her robes, sliding them over her shoulder. “You are mine, beast, and soon the galaxy will know it.” he bit into her collarbone, hard. She cried out, the pain bringing her over the brink.

Her whispers snuck into his head, and he pushed harder at the sensation of her coming around him. He growled with every thrust as he was taken by his own climax, biting down even harder as he came, the taste of her blood on his tongue. He panted against her skin, hair fallen loose from his efforts as he leant into her. She shifted but he held her tight, enjoying the feeling of coming down inside her. Part of him still didn’t allow himself to believe this was real, and he intended to claw for every second he could get.
As their breathing slowed they reluctantly separated and adjusted themselves, attempting to return to some semblance of decency.

He ran a finger over the purpling bite on her chest. “You might want to heal that, it, ah, I didn’t mean to-”

“No.” she grinned “I want to keep it.”

He bit his lip and pulled her to him, nuzzling into her neck “Stars, I’d take you again right now if I could.”

She closed her eyes, breathing in the scent of him as she leant into his chest.

*Tea and… incense?* The herbs Orgida burned were a very specific and pungent blend, it was a unique scent.

“Your uniform... it smells like her building on Canto Bight.”

“Mm, I had an errand to run while you were resting. There is a gift for you in the cell block, beast. I thought you might want to have a word with your cousin.”

“You are too kind to me, General Hux, sir.” She suddenly leapt to her feet, the pleased expression on her face replaced with apprehension. “Wait, Kylo Ren doesn’t know she’s here yet, does he?”

“No, I brought her for you.”

“I need to go, if he gets to her who knows what she’ll say.” She kissed him passionately one more time before running out of the room, smashing right into the two troopers patrolling the level.

“Uh, sorry, ma’am, er...” they went to help her up but she shrugged them off and ran to the lift. The troopers looked over to see Hux standing awkwardly in the utility closet. “Uh, evening sir” they saluted him and quickly marched off down the hallway in the opposite direction.

One trooper elbowed the other “So, you think it’s true? That-”

He held out his hand to cut his partner off. “Buddy, like I said earlier- whatever that is, it’s *not* in my paygrade.”

Ruxinn leapt to her feet when the cell doors opened. She was placed in one of the interrogation chambers but left to wander around the room. As much as Hux wanted to restrain and gag her, he decided to leave her fate up to her cousin.

“Look at you! I knew you’d be fine. You’re so strong, I’ve never had to worry about you.”

“My dearest cousin, what have they done to you?” Her voice was soft but emotionless, and the baroness found the unsettling stillness worrisome. Ichara waved her hand gently and the imperial cuffs fell to the floor.

“Thank you dear!” She went to hug her, but Ichara held her hand up to stop her, walking around her cousin in a slow circle as she blathered on. “You understand why I did that, don’t you? The Jedi girl, I’m sure you would be interested in her too. It didn’t go according to plan, but, but you’re fine
and the General seems quite well. Certainly well enough to assault me and kill off half my guards, at least. I do hope I’m returned before too long, or this could escalate to a neutrality issue. ”

She laughed at her cousin’s display, amused by how completely oblivious she was to the danger around her. Ruxinn truly had no idea or appreciation for the power she had. As she’d proven time and time again, Ichara was nothing more than an attack dog on a leash for her.

The underestimation of a ‘cur’ seems to be the downfall of many. She mused, only spurring herself on. As she made her way to the brig level, she struggled to decide if her cousin was worthwhile enough to keep alive.

“It’s sad to think that I survived near death on Aleen, only for me to return home to find my mother murdered. Completely lost, I came to you and you took me in.”

The Baroness wasn’t entirely sure where this was going. “Of course, you know I have always been there for you. Family sticks together, and that’s why I know you’ll help me with this misunderstanding.”

“You didn’t coddle me though, did you Ru. You made sure I earned every scrap of kindness you gave me.”

“Y-yes, I, it made you strong, ‘Chara. No one appreciates things if they are just given freely.”

“I remember the first task you gave me, ‘removing’ the urchins that wouldn’t leave your block. You know, when I first found the little pack I tried to talk them into leaving, I didn’t want to hurt them. One of them came at me with a pipe, and I cut him down in a fraction of a second… and then I couldn’t stop. I liked it, it was freeing. I felt power like I had never known… power that the universe seemed to have that I wasn’t allowed access to, a power that I was simply the victim to. I realized the difference between life or death pulsed in the palm of my hands. It was the best night of my life.”

“I hunted them through the night, every beggar, thief, and ‘undesirable’ that lurked on your streets. Every slice of my sabers was a testament to my abilities. I tried to tell myself that in a way, death was better for them, but when the sun rose I realized I didn’t even care enough to bother justifying my actions to the guilt inside me- there wasn’t any there. In a way, I’d been sleeping all my life, and that sun rise was the first day that *I* ever truly saw.”

“Yes, you had a chore to do, I recall. Pardon my impatience but is there a point to this line of thought?”

She strolled over to the comm pad by the door, pressing the button to the command center for the brig level. “Tell Kylo Ren that the apprentice requires his presence in interrogation room 5b.” She closed her eyes, wiping the smile from her face before she turned around.

“Anyways... the next night I went out again. And again after that. Soon there were stories told about haunted alleys on Orgida’s block, that after sundown ‘death lurked in the shadows’. ” she pointed her index finger at Ruxinn and shook her hand, laughing “But you, you couldn’t stand that you weren’t getting credit for it, so you told your friends. You rented me out to the owners of other blocks, my two blades carving out what eventually became the High District. If that was the only thing I suffered things might be different.”

“Yes, true, but look at you now- in the highest ranks of the First Order! If it weren’t for me you wouldn’t be here, you’d still be assassinating people for that little fat man on Bakura. You’re
powerful, yes, but we’ve done everything together, Ichara, don’t forget that. The both of us together, loyal to only each other, are unstoppable.”

“Mm. That little fat man paid you quite a bit for me if I remember correctly.”

“Does that really matter now? The cut I gave you has made you richer than many. If you can make Kylo Ren understand what I was trying to do, that I’m loyal to the First Order, I may become a senator yet. The power we could wield on that planet together would make us a true force to be reckoned with, you and I.”

“Oh Ruxinn… I suppose what I’m trying to say, is thank you. You keep rushing to your end game and can’t take simple gratitude from your own blood. There was always a darkness drifting within me, but you are the one who put me hand in hand with the power inside me... and I’m going to give you one last gift to thank you for that. As long as you’ve known me, could you ever say I’m not kind?”

The simpering tone from her groveling disappeared. “What do you mean ‘last’? Don’t do anything foolish, girl. Don’t make me give you the same warning I gave to your General. Head over your heart- anything else is unbecoming of a person in power. I saw the way he looked at you, don't think other's didn't see it too. It's sickeningly... dangerously... obvious.”

The doors opened and Kylo Ren entered, irritated. “I told you specifically to report to me once you were healed.”

She ignored him, eyes fixated on the woman before her. “See? You finally got to meet Kylo Ren, and I finally get to collect what you owe me.” The Baroness’ eyes darted between them, and before she could say a word, she doubled over in agony. “For everything.”

The air rippled around Ichara as she clawed her hand out, golden eyes rimmed with crimson as she muttered under her breath.

“We can’t interrogate her if you kill her.”

“I have what I need.” she snapped. The Baroness choked up a mixture of blood thick with gore, and collapsed to her knees; the sounds of bones crackling as she seemed to turn in on herself. She fell to the ground, twitching as life left her twisted form.

Ichara tilted her face up with the tip of her boot “Now we’re even, dear cousin.” with that, she turned to face Kylo, who looked nauseated by the display. “I’ve avenged the wrongdoing on Canto Bight. I hope this pleases you, Supreme Leader.”

“What did she say of the scavenger?” His nerves were still frayed after the General’s questioning in the office earlier. He’d clearly been emboldened by this new information, and his additional guards being present was a blatant threat. While their previous relationship seemed to have turned to bitterness, Kylo now questioned the judgement in sending the pair somewhere alone together.

“She wanted to barter the scavenger in exchange for the First Order’s assistance in acquiring the position of senator. If we did not secure her, she hoped that the death of you and I would get her help from the Resistance. Weak, shortsighted, and treacherous goals. She was in contact with the Resistance from the surface, so I would suggest sweeping her place of work. We may find information on their whereabouts.”
“And what Hux said, is it true?” She said nothing, and he took another step closer to stare down at her. “Did you risk your life for him?”

“Yes.”

“You are to blame for your injury, then.” He raised his hand but stopped himself from throwing her, lips twitching as he swallowed back a silent fury. Instead, he put his hand on her shoulder, digging in his fingertips so hard she was sure it would bruise. He was fighting a battle inside himself, unsure of what to do. After a moment, he pulled her to him and wrapped his arms around her in a stiff embrace. “He can’t be trusted and cares for no one but himself. If he puts you in that position again I’ll kill him myself. You’re more important than he could ever be.”

“Yes, Supreme Leader.” She mumbled into his chest, every muscle in her body tensed. Rather than relief at the apparent forgiveness she felt nothing.

“See to it this is cleaned up.” He abruptly released her and almost ran from the cell. He was angry with Ichara for putting herself in danger, almost jealous of Hux in a way, and since their argument he hated to admit he found himself lonely. The fact that he missed her in turn made him resent her for having any hold over him. In his mind their falling out was her fault. It was a vicious cycle of emotions that circled in his chest, making it impossible for him to focus and difficult for him to decide where to go from here.

Hux had been streaming the camera feed from the interrogation on his holopad. A part of him was half afraid that their discussion would reveal that she was aware of the planned attack. Her display of brutality at disposing of her cousin made his heart swell with pride, grateful to have that power back on his side. Kylo looked ill and Hux couldn’t help but snicker.

*What a weak creature he is. Not fit to be a leader in the face of warfare.*

When Kylo took her in his arms the General’s eye twitched and his breath hitched in his throat- a bolt of hatred ran through the pit of his stomach like a spike. As quickly as he left the room, though, he saw it wasn’t reciprocated. She knelt down to her cousin’s mangled remains, and flicked off chunks of shredded lung and cartilage to yank off the opal pendant she always wore. Hand still bloody, she blew a kiss to the camera in the corner of the room- she knew Hux couldn't *not* watch this. He ran his finger down the image on the screen and smiled, returning to finish his statement for the broadcast in the morning.

*Mine.*
Chapter Summary

I might have posted this prematurely bc I was just so excited :)

Ichara is getting a little unhinged, especially after meeting Rey :P

The General's projection was posed in front of a banner with the First Order symbol, Phasma on the right of him and an elite guard on the left.

“In an act of absurdly underhanded treachery, the Resistance orchestrated an attack during what was supposed to be a pleasant evening, as Canto Bight is a well known neutral territory. Instead, we were ambushed by over thirty Rebel fighters, who gave neither thought nor care to who they could have struck down in the hail of fire. The Supreme Leader’s Apprentice was badly injured by a bolt to the stomach in a heroic act to save the life of her General, my life, but is expected to make a full recovery. The Baroness Ruxinn Orgida admitted to her part in contacting the rebel scum and assisting in the orchestration of this cowardace. Let it be known that the punishment for treason is death, and regarding the two-faced baroness justice was swift and brutal; as it shall be to all who dare stand against the First Order!”

“Cantonica has long remained a neutral planet, and this blatant disregard for our traditions and laws will not go without punishment. Any members of the rebellion will be arrested on sight, and are barred from doing business while on our soil or in our airspace. The-”

Leia turned off the projector mid way through Senator Borun’s reply and shook her head “Well that’s the end of that.”

Ichara’s body had still cried out for rest, and after showering her cousin’s blood away she crawled under the covers and slept like she was dead, too. She woke late in the morning to a message from Hux with a video clip of his speech attached.

--

Your General thanks you for your service.

--

Ichara smiled lazily at Hux’s appearance on the screen.

'Her General', stars I love that phrase.

He was positively rabid when he gave his speeches, something she found enrapturing. She was still stationed on Bakura when he destroyed the Hosnian system- the Starkiller speech was the first time she'd taken note of him, and the instant attraction was undeniable. Waking in such a good mood, she expected meditation to be fairly pleasant, but Kylo’s statements replayed in her head and it quickly ruined her sunny disposition.

I’m so disappointed in you
You are to blame for your injury, then
You will obey me
I told you to call me Kylo when we’re alone
Wearing that mercenary trash again

She opened her eyes to look at her armor, boxed in a corner. If I was wearing that, the bolt would have hardly done anything.

The only reason she didn’t was because Kylo would have had a fit. In her mind he was truly the center of all her misery. Though it seemed he ‘forgave’ her in his own strange way yesterday she couldn’t let it go. She dressed in her robes and snatched up the helmet he so despised. She was putting her foot down, and he’d just have to deal with it. There’d at least be a decent fight out of it, and after the thrill of finally killing her cousin she felt empowered, ready to take on whatever stood in her way.

*Hell, I might just go ahead and kill him too.*

She flipped the hood of the robe over her polished helmet and flew through the hallways, getting more and more excited with every step.

For the first time since she’d been on board there was some clarity to her overall goals. There was a brief amount of time where started to care for Kylo and understand how he’d become what he is, but it passed like a shadow in the night. The kindness she'd shown him was thrown back in her face almost daily anyways, not to mention the compassion she’d felt growing for him only served to cause her anxiety, as if she were failing herself.

-  

Kylo spent the morning sulking. He’d hoped she might come to him later that evening, but now he worried if things would still be tense between them. He didn’t know how to fix the situation, he just knew that he didn’t want to fight with her anymore. His pride was still wounded but he was trying to push it from his mind.

As if the world was bent on making things worse Rey appeared before him, with her hair down and a white flower tucked behind her ear. “I heard about what happened, and I’m glad you’re okay.”

“Your hair is different. I like it.” His voice was monotone. He didn’t have the energy for their usual games, and while he didn’t mean to compliment her, the words just kind of came out.

She blushed. “Thank you, um, but I suppose if I asked you to put a cowl on you’d ignore me like last time.”

“Yes.”

He was wearing only silken black pants and his gauntlets, held on with a brace across his chest as he sprawled out across one of the couches in the library.

“Well you look miserable.”

“I am. It’s just that simple.”

“I actually didn’t get forced here this time; I could feel you and I was worried.” It was a lie. After the complete failure of the Canto Bight mission, she was eaten up with curiosity, wanting to see what
actually happened. In his eyes, though, her expression was one of…. Pity. His misery soon embittered itself into anger at her reaction.

“Are you here to gloat, scavenger?”

“I told you I was worried. You should be grateful instead of being horrible to the one person who cares about you. Well, other than your apprentice I suppose. I hope she doesn’t follow the Rule of Two.” Rey crossed her arms matter of factly.

Kylo let a small smile slip “You’ve been reading up on Sith? Strange.”

“Well if you’re deciding to stay with that path I thought I should at least understand my enemy better.”

The smile faded as soft as it came. “That’s right. We’re enemies. Something you seem to forget time and time again.”

Kylo and Rey both looked to the door in surprise when a vocoded voice joined the conversation.

“Enemies indeed”

Ichara drew her saber and whirled it beside her in a tight circle “Rey the Scavenger. I finally get to see you in the flesh. I’m honored.”

“Are you the apprentice? I thought you were injured, did you heal yourself? How do you know who I am?” Rey was more fascinated than afraid, and with more questions than fear.

Ichara moved her attention to Kylo, thankful her mask was hiding the expression on her face as she laughed condescendingly. “I saw you in his head. You. A scavenger from Jakku. I bet you still smell like the desert.”

Kylo lept to his feet and interrupted before the conversation could escalate “You need to leave. Now.”

She tilted her head to the side. “You have an enemy on board. I will leave when my job is done.” Kylo threw her backwards but she pushed back, suspended in midair. “Supreme Leader, you seem to be confused!” She whipped her hand out and slung a bookcase off the wall to fall on Rey, and to her surprise, it fell through her.

She slowly lowered herself back to the ground, shaking her head “Projection. There’s no way you’ve learned how to do that.”

Rey put her hands on her hips “I can feel him across the force, I can come to him.”

*Force Bond.*

Kylo and Ichara glanced at each other for a millisecond before they both sprinted to the door-she spun around as she dove through and threw him back with a jolt of force lightning, surprising even herself, before quickly leaping back up and jamming her lightsaber into the controls to seal it shut. She knew she only had seconds ahead of him to escape. Fury and fear shot through her as she flew down the corridors, seasoned troopers pressing themselves against the walls and out of her way.
“You have no idea what you’ve done you foolish girl!” he snarled, straining as he forced the doors open. Before he left he looked over his shoulder- Rey was standing with her mouth agape, unsure of what she just witnessed. “If I die it’s your fault, but I suppose that’s what you wish for your enemies anyways.”

“No, Ben I-”

He ran out and dressed quickly before he took off after her. His secret couldn’t get out to anyone, especially Hux.

She had intended to go to the general’s office first but didn’t have time. She made it to her quarters and fumbled in the drawer for the stimulant she used to wake up from her sedated sleep. The needle jabbed into her wrist, and what was left of its contents surged through her veins like fire.

She ripped off her gloves, and stood with her saber ignited, facing the door. “All I have to do is touch his neck. That’s it. The time is now. It’s here. You can do this.” she babbled to herself over and over as she waited for her predator.

Ichara’s knuckles whitened on her saber at the sound of beeping on the keypad outside her door. It was like time was slowing down, as if she could feel every individual molecule of air scrape across her tongue as she breathed in- the high pitched hiss of the door was like a freighter leaving a hanger in slow motion, the footfalls of his boots echoing like thunder as he entered her quarters, the maimed saber sounding like heat-lightning as it crackled to life.

It was too much.

Her saber clattered to the ground as she fell to her knees, hands on the side of her head, threatening to crack her teeth from the pressure, heart pounding like the footfalls of a fathier on the track, a trickle of blood leaking from her nose. As quickly as everything slowed down, though, it rushed back like water bursting through a dam.

When he saw the state she was in he was confused- until she summoned her saber and leapt up. Already prepared for a fight he quickly circled his blade around to catch her own, the force of his blow pushing her back down to her knees. She slipped him to the side and he fell forward. It wasn’t just swinging- she was hacking at him with wild abandon. He noted she’d soon exhaust herself as usual and he was right. She could feel herself tiring and the worry crept in. She wasn’t prepared for this battle at all. Not here. Not yet. Not like this.

It was the breath of a lie that brought her back from her amphetamine-induced panic.

“You’ve been teaching her all this time, haven’t you!” she shouted over their clashing blades. “And I was too stupid to see it!” She stumbled in deflecting one of his heavy blows, and fell backwards to the ground.

He stepped towards her, swirling his saber beside him angrily, not willing to strike her down quite yet.

She looked up at him, panting, hair matted to her forehead with sweat.

“All you do is spar with me, while you’re off teaching that scavenger ways of the force.” she spat at him with disgust. “Are you trying to lure her here that way? If that’s the case she’s using you, you big, lumbering idiot!”
Kylo sighed with relief. He was afraid she’d discovered the Force Bond, though it was so rare it was generally written off as a myth. Her being angry or jealous was a much simpler thing to handle.

“I’m not teaching her anything. She finds me through the force to harass and taunt me.”

Ichara glared up at him, eye twitching. “Liar.”

“You’ve done nothing by lie to me since you got here!” he shouted pointing at her with his saber. “The lightning- what else are you hiding from me?”

She stood slowly, hands up, leaving her saber on the floor as a sign of surrender. He kept his blade pointed at her as she rose.

“That was actually the first time I’d done that, Kylo, that’s how angry you made me.” She moved slowly to the side to collapse onto the couch, brushing the sticky hair from her face, doing her best to manage a smile. “I’m actually quite impressed with myself to be honest.” he holstered his saber and put a hand on the wall on each side of her, leaning in menacingly.

“If you tell anyone about her ability to find me, I will kill you. I will gut you wherever I happen to find you.”

“I know.” She reached up to brush a lock of hair from his face, running a hand down his jaw to his neck, but he pulled away.

“Do you want me to kill her for you?”

“No.” he said, almost too quickly, pacing in the room. She knew his lineage, and now she knew this. He felt trapped.

“Well what are you going to do about it?”

“I’m going to use it to find her and find the Resistance. She’ll slip up. Why did you run from me in the library?”

“I saw that look on your face- It told me to run.” she stood and walked over to him, jabbing him in the chest with an index finger “I distinctly recall you saying my senses were dull- perhaps they’re getting better.”

She flinched when he lifted a hand towards her face, taking his thumb to wipe the blood from her upper lip. All it did was smear it with the perspiration on her face. “You know two things about me no one else on this ship knows. I hope you know how much I trust you.”

He frowned when she snorted at him, shaking her head. “No you don’t, Kylo. Hell, you don’t even like me that much.”

“I recall you being the one saying you hated me.”

“I do hate you, especially when you’re being awful.” She smiled, but it wasn’t a lie.

She shoved past him to grab a liquor bottle from the shelf in her kitchenette, pouring two glasses. When she turned around he was gone.
“Fucking scavenger” she grumbled. “Showing up with a Farisi orchid in her hair like some blessed
damn light bearing angel” Just as she cleared the first glass she slammed it down, eyes wide.

“There’s only one place those grow.” In the time she spent working for the wealthy, she picked up a
few things- tidbits about the exotic flowers for their decor was one of them.

Between the amphetamines, adrenaline and alcohol, she felt like her heart was going to explode. She
knelt down and cleared her mind the best she could, using every ounce of willpower she had to focus
the chaos inside into something useful.

Rey was in the woods, her excitement at meeting the apprentice ruined by Kylo’s reaction. She
stopped abruptly at the sound twigs snapping behind her. She could feel the darkness- but it wasn’t
Kylo. A wiry arm snaked around her waist, the other over her shoulder to trap her in a head lock.

Rey yelped in surprise, her fingers slipping on the robed arm holding her tight.

“Ssh, scavenger. Be still.” Ichara’s eyes scanned the surroundings, midday sun making the lush
fauna around them seem to glow under the two suns. “My, you’re far from home.”

“Who are you? What do you want?” the voice was almost familiar, but she couldn’t place it.

Rey struggled against her arms and Ichara just cackled. “Mmm. You do smell like the desert. I bet if I
tasted you it’d leave grit in my teeth” she growled, lazily running her tongue up the salty skin on her
neck to flick the tip of her ear lobe. “Ben doesn’t know what he’s missing out on… or does he?”

“You’re the apprentice! How did you find me? How did-” Ichara shoved her to the ground as she
released her, disappearing before she could turn around. She collapsed when she returned to the ship,
a rivulet of fresh blood trickled from her nose into her mouth, adding a macabre streak to the already
mad smile cracked across her face.

“I found the hole you're hiding in, scavenger.”

Rey’s eyes searched the empty air behind her, and if it weren’t for the wetness she wiped from her
neck, she would have thought she’d imagined it all.
Chapter Summary

Ichara gets to meet General Organa

Kylo and Rey finally see each other in the flesh

Rey's force bond situation gets outed to her friends

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Everything that happened next was a blur, but in the center of the the chaos was one pinprick of calm in the middle of it all-
The killer, the general and her fleet.

Hux leapt to his feet when she burst into his office, looking all the part of someone who had gone mad.
“I found the Resistance- they’re on Balamin. I have a plan, and I need you to trust me more than you ever have, Hux.”

He rushed around his desk to take her hands in his, eyes gleaming. “Tell me everything, beast.”

After over an hour with the General, she returned to her quarters, adding the elaborate blue plates to her mercenary armor that Ruxinn had her wear; even her security detail had to be excessively gilded. Once sufficiently done up, she met Phasma at the armory. Finally, she was ready to tell Kylo Ren.

He was almost done cleaning up the mess from earlier when she appeared behind him- shoulder plates of elite guard armor emblazoned with the First Order logo affixed over deep blue plates with silver filigree over the matte black mercenary gear, her helmet under her arm.

“I have a present for you, Kylo Ren.”

His hand slowly moved to his saber, unsure of what was going on. “And what would that be?”

“I found the Resistance. They’re on Balamin. It’ll be nightfall by the time we get there if we leave now.”

He narrowed his eyes. “How?”

“Look-” the flower had fallen from Rey’s hair and stayed behind, crumpled on the floor admist the items scattered across the floor. “It’s a Farisi Orchid, they only grow on Balamin, off the Commenor Run. We can start there on your scavenger hunt.” she laughed at her own joke, still a little twitchy from the amphetamines earlier, and sky high on the moment.

He could sense the excitement coming off her in waves. She wasn’t lying.
Everything else fell away, the entirety of his focus locked onto their new mission. He said nothing and ran past her, rushing to get dressed. His hands trembled as he pulled his boots on. This is it. This is finally it. I'll have her.

She leant against the door frame to his bedroom, smirking as he frantically put himself together. “Do you want me to alert Hux that we’re-”

“No!” he shouted without meaning to, taking a breath and calming before continuing. “No, he doesn’t need to know. This stays between us for the moment. He’ll know when he needs to know. And Ichara… your armor…”

“I’m not taking any chances. The blue plate is songsteel from my cousin, and I needed new shoulder guards anyways.”

They paused by the doors in his quarters. “Are you ready, Supreme Leader?”

No.

“Yes. It’s time to deal with this once and for all. We’ll formulate a plan on the way.”

He tapped a comm button calling down to the hangar “Ready the Command Shuttle, I need to leave now.”

“It’s ready sir, your apprentice ordered it done about an hour ago.”

He looked to Ichara, smug grin across her face. “You ought to be more appreciative of me, you know.”

A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth as he turned to leave. They were a formidable display as they strode across the hangar, the air around them crackling with their energy. Hux watched them through the large glass wall of an overseer station, thrilled but nervous for her at the same time. If their plan worked, it could be one of the most insidiously cunning military missions of his career. There was a lot that could go wrong, but he did his best to silence his doubts with faith in her.

I wouldn’t lo-, er, care for, ah, hold her in such high esteem if she weren’t exceptional.

Godspeed, my wicked thing.

Ichara rushed down the ramp as soon as the ship landed. “They likely detected something, so we might not have much time. You summon her and I’ll take a hard left to circle back and come up from behind. We agreed, try to faint her first, or between the two of us we can at least subdue her. I need you to give me some time though, about 10-15 minutes to get into position. Understood?” He was usually the one barking orders, but he was so overwhelmed with the situation that he was glad she’d taken control.

“Agreed. And Ichara… thank you.”

She put a hand on his shoulder, “All in all, I think this will be good for you, Kylo.” and with that she took off running into the woods, the only one to enjoy the irony of her statement. Underbrush dragged against her armor, branches scraping across her helmet as she ran as fast as she could, stumbling more than a few of times on the uneven ground.
After what felt like ages, the edge of the base came into view. She took a deep breath, allowing herself a second to relish this moment.

“This is how the end begins.”

She popped open the access hatch to her saber and smacked it against her hand; the kyber crystal popped loose and fell into her palm. She undid some of her armor to tuck it away in her bra for safe keeping.

“I’m sorry old friend.” she snapped the hatch back and sighed with sadness as she rubbed dirt on the outside of it before sliding it back into its holster.

She removed her helmet and hid it in the underbrush, tying her hair in two tight buns. “And now for the fun part.”

There was a steep rocky embankment that lead down to a 100 yard dead zone between the woods and the base. She cupped her hands and cried out before throwing herself down it. Spotlights were on her in a flash and she could hear the scrambling of fighters as they rushed out to meet her.

“I think it’s a First Order trooper!” one of them barked over the comms “Wake the General!”

They roughly yanked to her feet, and it was all she could do not to smile. She called back on her time spent smuggling to muster a half decent Correllian accent. “I need to talk to General Organa, it’s urgent.”

“Yeah, I bet you do.”

“I’m not here to hurt anyone, I’m here to, augh!” One of the men holding her threw her back to the ground and put a foot between her shoulder blades. They quickly removed her blasters and searched her over for more weapons.

“She’s got a lightsaber!” they lept back, all aiming their blasters on her as more arrived. “Who are you?!”

“Orgida.” She slowly worked her way up to a kneeling position, and held her hands up in surrender. “It doesn’t work, it’s a family heirloom... belonged to my grandfather. Go on, press the damn button.”

The soldier that seized it held up a shaky finger before quickly jabbing the button. Nothing.

“It doesn’t have a crystal in it, dumbass. And I’m not a trooper, I’m a bounty hunter. I escaped the First Order to find sanctuary.”

“You should watch your mouth, dumbass.” The soldier cracked her across the face with the saber, and she committed his face to memory when she looked back up, grimacing through bloody teeth.

“Woah woah, I know she’s garbage but come on man, we’re better than that.” Poe was late to the party, but at the first alert of a trooper he ran as fast as he could down to the field.

“Thank you, voice of reason.”
“Yeah don’t thank me yet.” He took her wrists from the air and slapped a pair of cuffs on her. “Come on, let’s go.”

She squinted in the bright lights of the hangar, a flock of soldiers gathered inside to gawk at the intruder. Finn made his way to the front of the crowd, a look of confusion on his face as he ran up to his friend.

“Poe, that’s some pieces of elite guard armor but she’s not one of theirs. I can tell. She looks like the guards Rose & I saw on Canto Bight.”

“That may be the case buddy, but she admitted to working for them- that’s bad enough.”

“Oh stuff your selfrighteous crap, pilot. I need to see General Organa.”

“The only thing you're seeing tonight is the inside of a cell.”

“Oi!” she yanked her hands away from him, standing fast. “Your damn General and the garbage fucking act you pulled on Canto Bight is why the First Order murdered my cousin. You should be showing me more respect.”

Poe looked down at her “Wait, so you’re the informant.”

“And hell of a lotta good it did me, too. Take me to her. Now. There’s something she needs to know, and your ungrateful lives depend on it. I’m not telling anyone but her.”

“Eh you could be lying, we’ll let Rey figure that out.”

She laughed “Sounds good, you do that.”

The base didn’t have anything in the way of an interrogation room, so he brought her to a room they used for meetings. It was fairly cramped, but had a decent amount of seating around a long table that ran down the middle.

“Keep my blasters, I don’t care, but have that oaf return my saber. It’s junky and broken, but it’s mine, it means a lot to me. Please? It’s the least you can do, considering.”

Poe glared at her for a minute before poking his head out in the hallway. “Hey, yeah, you, gimme that. Don’t make that face or I’ll start calling you dumbass too.” He stepped back into the room and held it out in front of him, but didn’t let her take it yet.

“No, you wait, I’m not stupid.” He mashed the various buttons one by one.

She rolled her eyes “Are you sure about that?”

He tossed it onto the table. “Ha, funny. Here, take your broken lazer sword and wait.”

Rey felt Kylo when they landed. She was out walking the treeline searching, and just when she was beginning to think her imagination was playing tricks on her, a voice whispered in her mind.

*Rey. Come to me.*
As if running on auto pilot, she slipped off into the woods, knowing exactly where to go. It was a bit of a difficult journey, the path she took was through overgrown underbrush that hadn’t been traversed in decades.

And then there he was, a hulking shadow in the moonlight. She hid in the treeline for a moment, too overwhelmed to move.

“I know you’re there.” he called out, no hint of malice or anger in his voice. “Come to me.” She slowly made her way toward him in the clearing, the ominous shape of the command shuttle looming behind him.

She held back, standing a few feet in front of him. “I’m not coming with you, you know.”

“I didn’t ask that, did I. Is it that you want to come with me?”

“You know what I want, Ben. I want you to stay.”

He shook his head, a hint of irritation in his voice, “No, no you know I can’t do that.”

She moved closer, holding her hand out to him. “Please.”

He slowly slid off his glove, and reached out to gingerly take her hand. He stepped closer and went to wrap his other arm around her. She jumped back, eying him warily.

“Was that really your grand plan, to just carry me off?”

“Actually I... I was just going to hug you, but I suppose that was stupid.” he felt sheepish. Finally seeing her in the flesh was different than their force bond interactions, and he found himself almost shy in her presence.

“No! No it wasn’t stupid. Um, but if you try anything I will fight you, Ben Solo.”

He did his best to swallow back his frustration, eyes darting to the tree line behind her. “So, do you mean, um”

She slowly put a hand on either side of his waist, and he awkwardly put her arms around her.

_Just a moment can’t hurt._ She closed her eyes and wrapped her arms around him. After a second passed she sighed and melted into him. She could hear his heartbeat pounding through his tunic and pulled him tighter, the rapid cadence the only thing existing in her world at that moment.

_Where the hell is she?_

All too quickly the moment was shattered as his question was answered. Scrambled shouting over her comm crackled through the night. Rey pulled away and took a step back. “Something’s wrong.”

_Damnit._ Kylo was seething. He didn’t think she was incompetent enough to get caught- for a split second he hoped they killed her.

“Then come with me.”

“No, I…” she looked up to see his eyes had darkened, jaw set in determination. “Goodbye, Ben.”
She turned and sprinted to the treeline but was frozen in place mid stride.

“Enough of this, Rey! You are coming with me!”

“I. am. Not!” She pushed back against him with the light and broke free. The force sent him flying backwards into the ramp of the ship, dazing him as the back of his head connected with metal. By the time he stood she’d disappeared into the forest. Behind her she could hear his screams of rage echo in the distance as she ran.

Ichara was fighting the urge to reach out and try to feel the things around her. She’d folded inside of herself, trying to shield her abilities, focusing on gray nothingness. She allowed herself the liberty of forcing the cuffs off, though, just in case she needed the freedom of movement. Finally the doors opened, and General Organa entered with Rey and Poe.

She leant back in her chair, smiling. “Rey... the girl I’ve heard so much about. Kylo Ren has quite the fixation on you- there’s an underground bounty on your head, but I’m not here for that.”

“What are you here for then?” Rey could feel an air of... wrongness and something strangely familiar about the woman sitting across from her. It was unsettling. She was still shaken from her interaction with Kylo and wished everything would stop for just a minute. She wanted time to calm down and breathe.

“I want... two things. An apology for the death of my cousin, and payment for some valuable intel.”

Poe leant forward with his elbows on the table “And how do we know this isn’t some trick by the First Order? This all seems too convenient” Finn had told him stories of how they manipulated people and wasn’t about to take anything for granted.

“First off, I was hired by them, not a part of them. There’s a difference. Second off, what I have to tell you, well...” she laughed arrogantly “Lets just say there’s already a ruse at work here, and it’s in your ranks. Has been for quite some time now”

“What do you mean?”

“Ah-ah,” she waggled her finger at him “Nothing is free in my world. I have conditions.”

Poe leapt to his feet, frustrated, pointing a finger in her face “This isn’t a pazaak game, good people’s lives are at stake! You’re going to tell us because it’s the right thing to do, not to cash in!”

She leant into his face, unphased. “We see how doing the “right thing” turned out for Ruxinn, didn’t we? Besides- good, bad, right, wrong. It’s all subjective. You lot kill just as many ‘good people’ in this war.” She reclined back in the chair, and rudely thunked her boots on the table. “Don’t think you can guilt trip me.”

“Yeah, spoken like a true crook. We should just toss you back to First Order.”

She grinned and flipped him a select hand gesture “Do it. See if I care. They’ll be here soon enough anyways, and the Resistance will continue bleeding out from the inside.”

“Mister Dameron. Sit.” Leia grabbed the back of his jumper and yanked him down. “I apologize for him and for what happened to your cousin, but he is right. There are lives as stake here- not just
soldiers, but innocent people with no part in this war.”

“Frankly, General, I don’t care- and as far as I’m concerned, I have lost enough to earn that right.”

Leia sighed. “I was heartbroken to hear of her death, she did a risky thing trying to help us. I am very sorry for that. Tell me your conditions and we’ll do what we can, but know that there’s not much we can give.” She still felt guilt that the Baroness died for what amounted to nothing.

“I had to flee, they already suspected me of being the one that gave her intel on the gala. You know, the thing you guys mucked up.” she sat upright to lean across the table, conveying the seriousness of her request “Promise you’ll keep my presence here a secret, and I’ll help you. That’s all I want. I need you to hide me.”

“I don’t believe you. There’s something wrong here, I can feel it.” Rey had been silent, staring at the strange woman across from her, trying to put her finger on the problem. She had tried to reach out with the force, but it was like she didn’t exist at all- the seat may as well have been empty. It was unsettling.

“You’re right, Rey. There is. There’s a mole in your ranks. I’m not positive that I know who it is, but they’re privy to some fairly select information.”

Her heart fluttered in her chest as she thought of Kylo, mind replaying their interactions to see if she could have given anything away.

“Why are you really here? I just… I just don’t believe you.”

The smile budding on her lips was anything but friendly as her eyes bored into Rey’s “You seem nervous around me, why is that? Perhaps I have intel on you?”

*The force bond…*

She swallowed nervously “Poe is right, this is too convenient.” panic was starting to rise in her chest and it showed across her face.

Leia reached out and took her hand and noticed her skin was clammy, “What’s wrong, Rey?”

“What’s wrong, Rey?” Ichara repeated.

She stood and put both hands on the table, “Why are you really here?!?” she shouted.

Ichara responded in kind, slamming her fists down on the table “I told you why I’m here!”

“How did you find us?”

"Someone inside told us your location!"

"Well how did you get here!?” the tension in the room reached a fever pitch, the two yelling at each other.

“I came down with Kylo Ren!”

“He was alone!” Rey’s eyes went wide- she blurted out the words without thinking.
Ichara stumbled backwards over her seat and almost fell, pointing across the table with one hand to her face in faux shock. “It’s you, isn’t it? Oh stars please don’t tell him I’m here, please.” her eyes were wide as she begged.

Leia turned with an expression of hurt and anger on her face. “Rey… when did you see him?”

“I know how it looks, it’s not like that, please, you have to believe me. I-”

“Do you know how we found your base?” Ichara yelled over her pleading “Kylo Ren was holding a Farisi orchid- only found on, guess where? Balamin. He said that’s how he knew. I didn’t know where he got it, I chalked up to weird force stuff.”

“I didn’t, I can explain, please let me-”

“I don’t take the Supreme Leader as the flowery type. Tell me, do you always bring him gifts when you betray your friends? No wonder you didn’t want me here.”

“What the hell, Rey?!” Poe had gone pale, staring at her in disbelief. He found her almost childlike excitement at greenery endearing as she went through the forest at the edges of the base, tucking flowers in her hair. Now the memory made him sick to his stomach. “How could yo-”

Ichara twitched her fingers behind her back, sending Poe backwards across the room, and Rey cried out in horror.

“I’m sorry! Please, I didn’t, I… I…” tears ran down her face as she plead with them.

“All you force users are nuts, aren’t you? Lock me up, I don’t care, but get me out of this room. This was a mistake, I should never have come here.”

Poe picked himself up off the floor and grabbed Ichara by her arm. “We’re leaving. Are you safe in here, General?”

Leia looked weary. “Yes, Poe. I believe I am.”

Rey collapsed into the chair behind her and leant down onto the table, sobbing into folded arms, hiding her face.

Poe lead Ichara down the hallway towards the brig. For once he had nothing to say.

“After the way you guys screwed over my cousin, I don’t know why I thought it would be a good idea to come here. You’ll be the death of me.”

Poe sighed. “Hey, I’m sorry that happened. We got a bad deal on it too, lost a bunch of men and got banned from Cantonica. Look, you gotta stay in here for now while we decide what to do with you. You’ve gotta agree this is a crazy situation.”

“Look up old pictures of the baroness on the holonet, you’ll see me standing beside her in this exact armor. I am who I say I am.”

“We’ll see. Anyways, here’s your home for the night. Not as luxurious as the First Order, I’m sure.” He flipped on the forcefield and left to go check on Leia and Rey.
“There’s a scouter squadron going out to the planet in about 8 hours- you might want to take them out! You’re welcome!” She called after him.

Ichara couldn’t really lay out on the cot in her armor, but rather than remove it she sat on the floor and leant back into the corner. She needed rest for what was coming next, but was no stranger to sleeping in less than comfortable situations. She was so smug she thought her heart might burst; her life’s work was finally coming to a head.

Chapter End Notes

I had so much fun writing this chapter and the one prior. Stuff really is speeding up and the next chapters are going to be wild. I just hope I write them well enough that you guys enjoy them too! <3

Thank you so much for reading, and a special shout out to everyone who has kept up with me through the writing of this, it means a lot <3
Frenemy of my Frenemy

Chapter Summary

Phasma isn't taking any of Kylo's shit, and neither is Rey.

Some of the good guys are warming up to Ichara a tiny bit, and she might kind of like them too.

"Keep your grubby little force fingers off me, scavenger."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Kylo was so livid that his mind was unable to process the magnitude of the white hot rage burning inside him. He made the return trip back to the Finalizer in silence, mind empty of thought, doing his best to sit and the controls and simply exist. If Rey had come with him, he wasn’t entirely sure what would happen next- he hadn’t really thought that far ahead. He just knew that he wanted her, and the fact that she literally slipped from his grasp was almost more than he could bear.

When his ship landed in the hangar Hux and his entourage were already waiting for him. He and Phasma were surrounded by a handful of his guards in what appeared to be an abandoned hangar. It seemed the General wanted to keep this incident as little-known as possible, no doubt viewing their actions as a direct disrespect to himself more than a security risk.

“What exactly did you two expect to accomplish by running off without informing a single kriiffing person of where you were going? That’s foolishly reckless behavior, Ren, even for you.”

“You seem to forget that you answer to me, General, not the other way around.”

The General’s attention shifted, eyes searching the ramp behind him. “Where is she?”

Kylo shrugged. “I lost her. She was inept and captured. Likely dead.”

“You lost her?” Hux balled his hands into fists as he approached him, voice rising to a shouting crescendo “You impetuous and absolutely incompetent cretin how in the hell do you just casually lose an entire person?! You-”

A flame of his rage flickered through a crack, leading Kylo to punch Hux in the face as hard as he could. The General fell to the ground, knocked unconscious on impact. His guards’ hands moved to their holsters, but Phasma snatched her blaster forward brazenly aiming it directly at his face.

“That is enough.”

Kylo stalked towards her slowly till the muzzle was inches from his face.

“Have you forgotten who your Supreme Leader is?”
Kylo had noticed the small shift in power dynamics since Canto Bight. Hux had suddenly become more comfortable in being blatantly disrespectful, using his guards to make the not so subtle point that they would obey Hux over him. Hux didn’t do anything that didn’t have some point to it, and he wondered what the end game of this new display was.

“What you’re doing right now could be considered treasonous, Phasma.”

“Would it?”

His eyes darted to the other elite guard, hands on their blasters, seemingly emboldened by Phasma’s display. He felt trapped… he felt alone. He just realized that he’d abandoned the one single person that supported him on this ship. A moan from Hux broke the tension of the standoff.

“Let General Hux know that I’ll debrief him once he’s calmed down.”

Phasma didn’t respond, holding her blaster up for a moment more before lowering it and marching past him to help Hux to his feet.

Hux held one hand to his face, gently pressing the purpling bruise on his jawline, the other steadying himself on his shiny compatriot. His eyes followed Kylo as he left, a bloody smirk at the corner of his mouth. “I need to get to the bridge. It’s time to send a squadron out to Balamin. Make sure to hand pick the worst pilots we have.”

He swayed for a second when he went to stand on his own. “Sir, are you sure you’re alright?”

“Don’t worry about me, Phasma. I feel excellent.”

- 

Leia reached a hand out to touch Rey’s arm.

Her shoulders shook as she sobbed. It felt like she’d lost everything and the despair was overwhelming. Ben chose the First Order over her again, and now she looked like a traitor to the Resistance. The ragtag bunch of Rebels had become the closest thing to a family she ever had, and the thought of losing them broke her heart.

“Rey, I need you to be honest with me right now, and I need you to tell me everything. I know you wouldn’t do anything to hurt us intentionally, but I need to know what you’ve done.”

“I haven’t done anything! It- it was Snoke. He made this thing called a force bond between me and Ben, and I can’t really control it all the way. I can feel what he feels across the Force, and sometimes it connects us- it’s like I’m there and he’s here, but not really. When he landed on the planet he called to me, and I was so surprised that he’d found us. I didn’t tell him anything about where we are, I promise. The flower, it was in my hair I didn’t give it to him. I guess he recognized where it came from. I’m sorry, General, I’m so sorry, I thought maybe I could use the bond to turn him back to the light. There’s still good in Ben’s heart, I can feel it. And I didn’t throw Poe! It just happened I don’t know how, I-” the sentence dissolved into more weeping at the memory of the look on Poe’s face.

“Rey… his name is Kylo Ren. He’s the Supreme Leader of the First Order and you need to
remember this. Ben has been gone for years, I don’t want to hear you use that name again. Why
didn’t you tell me about this when it started happening?”

“I don’t know… I-I was afraid you might not want me here, and I didn’t want to lose my friends.
You’re my family.”

“Family doesn’t give up on each other, Rey. We will always be here for you, no matter what. It’s
going to be okay- you’re going to be okay.”

Rey nodded and wiped her face on her arm wrappings, embarrassed at the mess she was.

“At least we have a heads up that they know our location. We’re going to have to load up the
transports and leave as soon as we can. I hate to do this, Rey, but given the nature of the situation…
we’ll have to keep you somewhere that he can’t tell anything about our surroundings, and I can’t tell
you where we’re going. I want to help you, but I’m going to need to research this more. Maybe
something can be done to end it.”

She nodded solemnly, still catching her breath from her sobbing. The doors opened and Poe stepped
into the room, refusing to look at Rey.

“Is everything alright, General? ”

“Poe, I need you to take her…” her sentence drifted off, not wanting to say the words. She expressed
enough intent with her look on her face for Poe to stop her.

“Don’t worry General, I’ve got it.”

“When you return I need you to make sure everyone is up and loading transports. We can’t stay
here.”

“The merc said something about a scouter squadron coming out here, I’ll keep an eye out for them.
We should be gone by the time they get here. Assuming she isn’t lying of course.”

“Poe, I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean for any of this to happen.” Rey stood, eyes searching his face for
some scrap of forgiveness.

It was strange to see his face, usually so animated, cast in a grey and somber expression. “Rey…
Just… Please don’t talk to me.”

Silent tears leaked from the corners of her eyes as he lead her to the only working cell.

Ichara lept to her feet. “Really? You’re going to put her in here with me? Are you sure that’s safe? I
mean for my safety, of course, the whole force thing and all.”

“Rey, if she doesn’t shut up you have permission to kill her.”

“Is that seriously your idea of a kriffing joke?”

Rey smiled softly, “Thanks, Poe.” The humor was proof that maybe she wasn’t entirely unforgivable
in his eyes. He still couldn’t bring himself to manage anything pleasant towards her, and left quickly
without saying another word.
Ichara fell back into the wall, the armor making an obnoxious squealing noise as she slid down to her previous sitting position.

“What’s wrong with you? I can’t feel you in the force.” Rey was actually glad to have a distraction, she didn’t want to think about the seriousness of the situation she was in. She sat cross legged on one of the cots, attention turned to the woman on the floor.

Ichara closed her eyes, leaning her head back in the corner. “If I can keep Kylo out I can keep you out. Keep your grubby little force fingers off me, scavenger. Go to sleep.” The darkness inside her was screaming to be released, her enjoyment of the situation only making it that much stronger.

Scavenger. Her voice was almost familiar to Rey, but it shouldn’t be. She reminded her of the apprentice, but she knew what that darkness felt like. It was even deeper and darker than how Kylo felt; like she was looking into a pit. Whoever or whatever the masked thing was, it lost to the darkness forever; there was no hope for it.

“What was it like, working with…” with Ben. “With Kylo Ren?”

She opened one eye “You’re not going to give me peace, are you?” she sighed and leant forward. “The last time I displeased him, he took his hand and squeezed so hard I saw stars at the edge of my vision... then took his mouth and held it just an inch from mine to suck the air from me.”

Rey blanched at the description. “W-why would he do that?”

“I told him I hated him and punched him in the mouth.” she laughed “along with It was so worth it.”

A sudden defensiveness came over her “Well it sounds like you deserved it, then, that’s a horrible thing to do.”

Ichara’s eyes flashed and her hand jerked involuntarily, the darkness threatening to break through thinning resolve. Don’t ruin this because of your ego. Calm down. She needed to give it something to chew on though or risk snapping.

“Rey, I need you to listen to me, real, real close. I know Kylo Ren better than you ever will. He’s a broken man, and broken things have sharp edges. Don’t think that brokenness in him won’t cut you to the bone, because it will.” There was a sudden intensity to her words, a flicker of darkness in her eyes. “And he’d just let you bleed out.”

“If you’re trying to scare me it isn’t working. I don’t think you know him at all, you’re just trying to be mean. I’ve seen the good in him.” She didn’t want to think about the darkness that resided along with it, what it made him capable of, or the things he did when consumed by it.

She leant forward, staring into Rey’s eyes, her voice dropping to a hushed tone. “Sometimes… when everything was still... I could see the good man in him slip out. He’d bite his lip, the depths of his eyes swirling with an unspoken worry; a sadness in his chest so heavy and all-encompassing it would drown a lesser man. And it was in those fleeting moments, I would truly find my heart breaking for him.” Rey hung on every word she said, mesmerized.

“But then I would remember the agony that he was responsible for, the way his mistakes caused everyone around him to suffer... and I would remember how he earned every scar and I reveled in his misery. What real worth can a 'good man' have if he lives inside a monster? Besides... if he’s so good, Rey, why did you abandon him again?”
“I didn’t abandon him! It’s not that simple, I… I couldn’t expect someone like you to understand. Why did he even bring you anyways? Wouldn’t it have made more sense for him to bring his apprentice?”

She cocked her head to the side, deciding to toe a dangerous line. “He did bring her- with all of your magical light side powers I’d have expected you knew that. He didn’t tell you? Tsk tsk, tricky boy.”

“How did you escape then? I still don’t entirely believe you.”

“I lied to him. Bad guys lie all the time. Simple. I’m going to try and sleep now and I suggest you do the same. I’m sick of talking about him.” She closed her eyes and reclined back into the corner.

Rey didn’t think she’d be able to sleep with everything that was going on, but crying was surprisingly taxing. She quickly drifted off, curled up in a ball on the cot. Ichara didn’t rest long, and what she did get was a light almost waking sleep. Rey was snoring softly, and Ichara did her best to quietly creep up to stand beside her and gently raise her hand, allowing the darkness to slither forth. It was a risky move, but she likely wouldn’t have another chance like this and the curiosity about their relationship was just too much.

She saw them hugging in the field Oh, adorable. The hand touch on Ach-to, and many many more conversations than she expected to see happening over the force bond. She was both impressed and irritated that Kylo had managed to keep such a huge secret from her for so long. Perhaps she was slipping.

“What are you doing?”

She pulled back into herself and spun around to see Poe and Finn standing at the control panel.

“Being jealous of how soundly she’s resting. I can’t sleep. This place is awful.”

Rey woke groggily to the sound of voices, heart sinking as reality sunk in. “So it wasn’t a bad dream then, I really am in here.”

Poe lowered the forcefield, “Finn, you go on and take Rey, I need to have a word with our guest.”

Finn motioned for her, a sad expression on his face; it seemed he knew about what happened too. It just served to compound Rey’s misery even more.

Poe waited until they left before he walked over. “Since you claim to know so much, tell me this.” he pulled his blaster out and pointed it at her. “How do you stop a force bond?”

“Rude. Put the blaster down and I’ll tell you.”

“I’m not playing games with you. Tell me. Now.”

She arched an eyebrow, a slight smirk on her lips. “There’s only one thing that can end it. It’s the same power than ends all things- Death.”

“So I have to kill Kylo Ren to free her?”

She threw her head back and laughed hysterically, pretending to wipe a tear from her eye. Poe
lowered his blaster, offended at her response. “What, you don’t think I can’t do it?”

“You’re going to have to beat me to it- that particular hit belongs to me.”

“Oh is that a bet? You’re on. Now let’s go, we’re leaving. You were right about the squadron, by the way- we don’t have long before more ships get here and we have to go. You’ll be with us on the Falcon so we can keep an eye on you.”

The transports docked in a large ship just outside of the planet’s orbit before shooting into hyperspace. By the time the Finalizer reached the planet’s orbit they were long gone.

When Kylo entered Hux’s office he was staring out at the stars instead of sitting at his desk. There were two additional guards inside on each side of the door.

“Is there a particular reason you’ve taken to additional security Hux? If there is a security issue I should be made aware.”

“Did you look for her before you left? Or did you just take off?” he didn’t even turn around to look at him as he spoke.

Kylo sighed. “I believe she was ambushed and captured, there was no way for me to retrieve her. She’s the one who came up with the plan, and she’s the one who failed it.”

Hux shook his head, still looking out at the stars. “So your apprentice gave you orders and then you let her fall into enemy hands. Brilliant.”

“Have you forgotten who you’re talking to?” he stalked over to Hux, physically spinning around to face him. His eyes glanced down to a dark purple bruise that had settled into the hinge of his jaw, a slight swell bowing out on his usually sharp jaw line. “I am your Supreme Leader, and you will respect me.”

“The Resistance is gone, Ren. You found them before, I suggest you find them again. The public execution of your apprentice would be an extreme embarrassment... if she isn’t already dead.”

The two men just glared at each other for a moment before Hux continued on in a noticeably softer voice, missing the usual acidic edge to his tone. “To be quite frank, Ren, I can’t stomach looking at your face right now. Just… please leave me alone.” he shrugged his shoulder free and turned back to look at the stars. It was the closest expression to sadness Kylo had ever seen on his face, usually perpetually contorted into some form of sneer.

“You still care for her, don’t you.”

“Would it matter if I did?”

“No. No I suppose it wouldn’t.” Kylo left without saying another word.

It wasn’t entirely an act. Hux hadn’t heard anything from her and he was starting to get worried. If they actually did kill her Hux swore he would do the best he could to drag out Ren’s execution as long and painfully as possible. While Ichara wanted to slowly choke him to death on stage, Hux wanted to cut his throat from ear to ear while he knelt in front of him. They decided to come to an
agreement when the time was closer.

*If she just comes back I'll let her do whatever she damn well wants with him.*

"Don't make me do this alone, beast." he whispered to the darkness of space spread before him.

Kylo was horrified at the sight of Rey when he found her through the force again. Rey & Ichara both sat cuffed side by side in the cargo hold of the Millenium Falcon.

"Rey, I—"

Rey clambered to her feet, angry “This is all *your* fault! My friends don’t trust me anymore because of you! They know about the bond and how you used it to hunt us down.”

Ichara stayed seated, raising a finger to her lips. *Shhh.*

“Don’t worry, Supreme Leader.” she winked “I’ll keep her safe for you.”

“You.”

“Sorry, Kylo. I ran. Can you really blame me? I mean, are you *actually* surprised?”

“You!”

His hand shot forward and she was pulled up the wall, hands clawing at her throat as he choked her. She didn’t fight back with the force, she just flailed- heels kicking against the wall as she struggled for air.

“Stop it, Ben!”

He ignored her, grinding his teeth as he squeezed harder.

“*Kylo Ren!* Stop it!”

He dropped her to the floor, eyes wounded at the use of that name. For a while he’d insisted that she call him that instead of his birth name, but now hearing it on her lips hurt him.

“Oh *hell* no!” He turned around to see Poe in the doorway, drawing his blaster and firing two shots through him. He disappeared.

“Rey, are you okay? So that’s the thing the General was talking about?”

One lone tear ran down her cheek.

“I’m so sorry Poe.” He couldn’t stay mad and ran to her, wrapping his arms around her.

“Hey I know it’s not your fault, you didn’t ask for this.”

Ichara was coughing, laid out on her side as she caught her breath. “Well he knows I’m here now and he’s *pissed*, so thanks for that. If you insist on keeping me prisoner can you at least put me somewhere without a Kylo Ren magnet?”
“We could always drop you out an airlock.”

“You know, I think that might be the best option at this point.”

“If Kylo Ren hates you, I can’t have too big a problem with you, come on.” He removed Rey’s cuffs and helped Ichara to her feet, “Don’t make me regret this.” and uncuffed her too. “Once we land on the main ship I’m gonna have to put these back on. No one wants to see you like this, Rey, but she can’t show favoritism and you have to understand how this looks.”

“I know, Poe.”

“And what did you say your name was? Orgida?”

“Yeah, but my friends call me ‘chara.'” she raised her eyebrows and smiled “So….”

“So come on Orgida, or you can hang out with the cargo, either is fine with me.” She rolled her eyes and followed behind them.

Finn smiled when he saw Poe and Rey walk into the common area, but cringed at the sight of Ichara behind them. “You sure you want that thing loose?”

“Oh come on, we both worked for the First Order. That pretty much makes buddies.”

He shook his head emphatically. “Oh no, no I don’t think it does.”

She fell into a chair with a graceless thud. “I thought the good guys were supposed to be nice.”

“Sorry, only to other good guys.”

“Fair enough.” she crossed her legs, eyes scanning the room, everyone staring at her with expressions ranging from intrigue to disgust. “So tell me, how do I become a good guy?”

Chapter End Notes

I love Poe so much. I hope you all enjoyed this chapter! I got a kick out of writing it!
Old Scars, New Wounds

Chapter Summary

Hux & Ichara's plans swing into action, and Kylo has to decide if he's going to be galvanized or broken by what happens next- as does the Resistance.

"Ben wasn’t the only one who loved her."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kylo was standing in his living area, looking down at his stomach where the bolts went through him. He couldn’t really be hurt through the force bond, but being shot still sent an odd electric shock through him. When he found Rey he couldn’t even feel Ichara beside her and noticed she didn’t resist him with the force at all. He didn’t know what lies she’d told them, but they clearly weren’t aware of who and what she was. The only reason she’d be cuffed in something so easily removed would be because she wanted to be.

It made no sense… unless she really did want to escape him? He couldn’t deny that the thought hurt a little bit. Truthfully she could have left any time she wanted if she truly desired it, though. He’d thought it was ridiculous that she’d been captured in the first place, and assumed someone must have had the element of surprise and knocked her unconscious. After seeing her contentedly cuffed beside Rey, though, her intending on being caught made more sense.

Rey.

He knew she’d be angry with him, but seeing her beside Ichara made him worry for her. She wasn’t too covert about her jealousy of their interactions, and was afraid there was ill-will harbored she intended to act on. Rey was strong, though, stronger than she knew.

But if Ichara had wanted to turn on him she had two perfect opportunities and didn't act on them. Seeing as Hux still cared for her that would give him a second reason on top of his loathing to jump at the chance to dispose of Kylo, so getting him to act would have been easy for her. Maybe she was working to get Rey from the inside?

There were so many unanswered questions circling in his mind, and each one had so much riding on it. He couldn’t focus with all the noise inside his head. He growled in frustration as a crackling red arc maimed the couch beside him, hacking until it was an indistinguishable pile of blackened bits. On the table beside it still lay the flower Rey had left behind, its petals wilted to an ugly brown. He sliced through it in a savage backswing, and continued on to destroy every piece of furniture in the room until he was exhausted, arms aching.

“I hope you have a back up plan should this fail, it’s all incredibly risky.” Hux had commandeered an engineering control panel in the bridge, fingers flying across the screen as he modified an existing program to be compatible with the older ships the rebels used.
“I am the back up plan, Hux. I’ve been in some pretty tight situations, this won’t be any different.”

“While your confidence gives me faith in you, dear, your ego is reminding me of Ren.”

Her heart skipped at the endearment. She rubbed his back with one hand and bent down to whisper over his shoulder. “It’s not my ‘ego’ speaking if it’s true.” Heat prickled his cheeks- it was an incredibly intimate gesture for someone as uptight as him, and it didn’t go unnoticed by other officers when he let her do it.

He turned his head, face just inches from hers. “Are you quite aware that you’re completely insufferable?”

She wanted to close the distance and press her lips to his, and it took every ounce of self control she had not to just do it right there. She moved close enough for her lips to just brush the tip of his ear. “Careful, General, I almost bit your tongue for you.”

He exhaled sharply, “I can’t very well complete this program if you continue harassing me.”

She stood up and leant against the side of the panel, grinning, watching him as he worked. The red symbols of the console cast a soft crimson glow across his face, his brow furrowed in concentration, his lips sometimes moving as he muttered to himself. She thought he was absolutely gorgeous.

Something wrenched in her chest at the realization of it.

What if I don’t come back? What if I never get to see him again? What would Kylo do? He has Phasma, he’ll be fine. She blinked rapidly, dispersing the sudden welling of tears in her eyes. Don’t be ridiculous. You’re stronger than that scavenger. You’re stronger than the whole damn Resistance. You’re being an idiot. She hadn’t expected to get emotional to such a degree. After being alone for so long, it was a strange feeling to care about someone else’s suffering for her actions. It was like her mind and her body didn’t quite know how to react- a disjointed array of emotions and responses going through her at once.

He pulled a data spike from beneath the console, unscrewing the end to remove its core. “All you need to do is swap this core into another spike and insert it into any port. You’ll have ten minutes from the time of insertion for the program to go active. Is that sufficient?”

“Absolutely.”

Hux waved the displaced officer back to their station and they both returned to his office. “Phasma has the shoulder plates ready, remember that the tracker is only going to send out one ping so it slips past their systems. Wait until you’re sure to use it, and give us adequate time to near your location before uploading the program.”

She lunged towards him, wrapping her arms around his waist, crushing him to her. “Thank you, Hux, for everything.”

He returned the embrace and rested his cheek on the top of her head. “Don’t act like this is goodbye, Ichara. If you think this could be goodbye then please don’t go, there’s other ways we could do this.” his tone was more plaintive than he meant, but for a second he felt a stab of genuine fear.

“I need this, Hux. I spent my life preparing for this. I promise I’ll come back. We’re going to burn
them from the inside out.”

“You’d damn well better- I just got you back and now you’re leaving me again. You’re a horrid beast.”

She laughed softly. “I’m your beast.”

“That you are.”

“What are you smiling about?” Rey’s voice broke her from the memory.

There was a softness in her voice when she replied. “I was thinking about a promise I made to someone very dear to me. I can’t wait to see the look on his face when I keep it.”

“What did you promise?”

“That I’d come back to him.”

There was a jolt as the landing gear deployed, and Chewie’s distinctive shout of shryiwook echoed from the cockpit. Poe popped around the corner “Alright, cuffs on, we’re here.”

“Do you mind if I pull these shoulder plates off and trash them? I really don’t want to have to wear this hideous logo anymore if I don’t have to.”

“Suits me.”

She walked over to the small trash chute, making a show of fumbling with the clasps for a minute. She found the small round tracker and flipped the little lever on the side before tossing them into the chute. The countdown had begun.

Hux woke instantly when his holopad chimed. He’d fallen asleep in bed with it resting on his chest, still clutching in his hands.

“There you are…” He transferred the coordinates to a star map. “Excellent, we’re already on the Commenor Run. They’re…” he laughed to himself when he zoomed in to see a more exact location. “Both convenient and fitting.”

Officers on the bridge were surprised by his presence. It was 0730 and his shift didn’t start till 0900.

“Set a course for the Alderaanian Graveyard. Contact the Horizon and have them meet us at these coordinates. We have a surprise for the rebels.”

Leia had discussed the Rey situation with the other higher ups in the Resistance and they decided that keeping her prisoner wasn’t necessary. Ichara didn’t get the same luxury and she was put in a cell in the belly of the ship.

“Come on Poe, I thought we were just starting to be friends.”

“Sorry merc, it takes more than doing the right thing when your hand is forced, to be my friend. I
mean if it weren’t for the thing with your cousin, would you still be here?”

“Honestly? I absolutely would.”

“Well it’s not my call to make. For what it’s worth, I don’t think you’re all that bad. You gonna prove me wrong?”

She smiled and shrugged, “Probably.”

Hux was set to arrive exactly two hours after she sent the ping out. Unable to communicate, it was imperative that she strictly timed everything. The program would send one more small ping once it was initiated to give him a more exact location closer to time. She’d arrived at 0700, so he should intercept with them at 0900. It was already a little after 0800.

“It’s now or never.” She turned away from the camera in the corner, retrieving the crystal from beneath her armor. She smacked some of the dust off her saber and used the force to center the crystal back into its focusing chamber. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes, allowing the force to flow freely back through her.

*Stars it feels good to be back.*

She unclipped the gaudy Cantonican plating to reveal the matte black armor below. With a wave of her hand the control panel short circuit and the forcefield disappeared. As short staffed as they were, no one was manning the brig security station. *Perfect*

After rifling through the station she found an abandoned data pad and a few spikes. She pulled the core Hux made from her boot and quickly swapped it in. She used the data pad to access the ship schematics, trying to chart the least interactive path possible to the bridge. The best path seemed to be a maintenance shaft; she took off down the hallway, dipping in just as voices came around the corner. Once she got to the level underneath the bridge she stared at the clock, heart pounding in her chest. There was a control panel close to the doors, and she inserted the spike. She typed in the trigger code and the core flashed.

“The beginning of the end.”

They had stayed a ways back on the run so as not to alert the Resistance. He was pacing the walkway, checking the time every minute. Finally, his holopad chimed again and tried not to stutter from excitement as he read out the coordinates. ‘Countdown one minute until we jump to that location. As soon as we come out of hyperspace, charge every weapon we have!’”

*This is it.* She stood outside of the bridge doors, heart pounding, adrenaline crackling through her like electricity. Her world went silent, and time stilled as she focused on the timer and slow exhale.

Three- *The killer*

Two- *The General*

She stepped through the opening doors, and when they closed the locking mechanism made a small click behind her.
One- Her fleet.

It worked.

The sound of frantic voices and beeping consoles rushed in as the floodgates of her awareness opened. The killer in her froze in anticipation, her heart as still and frigid as cold lake in winter.

“General Organa, is it the First Order?”

“What are you doing out?”

“Poe said I wasn’t a threat, but that’s not really important right now.”

“Yes, I don’t know how they found us. Their hyperspace tracking shouldn’t have this ship’s signature.”

“Ma’am, there’s an incoming comm, it’s from the Finalizer.”

“Maybe I can talk to him for you, buy some time? They already know I’m here thanks to that bond thing, so it’s no big deal now.” Ichara offered with a smile. A sinister joy curled around her heart like a snake, flicking its tongue, tasting and savoring the fear in the room.

“Put him through.” she ordered. “This is General Organa of the Resistance, we are holding one of your own. Perhaps there is an agreement we can work out that will be beneficial to both sides, General. No blood needs to be shed today.”

“Is that so, Princess? I’d like to speak with her.”

Organa nodded to Ichara.

“General Hux, sir, I believe the entirety of this war is about to change.”

“Is that so? I’m very intrigued to hear your response, Ichara. Do tell.”

She looked down at the stolen data pad. “Absolutely, sir. In fact…” almost

Leia stepped back and her heart dropped at the realization of what was happening. The darkness flew from the woman before her as if it had been released from a cage, its cold tendrils coiling around Leia’s awareness. She was the apprentice, and she was betraying them.

“It changes right now.”

A small alarm buzzed from one of the consoles, “General Organa!”

Ichara & the Republic soldier’s voice spoke the rest of the sentence in unison. “The shields are down.” Every face in the room turned to look at her in horror and confusion.

“It’s all yours, General Hux.”

“Excellent work Apprentice, I’ll see you soon.”

The hum of her saber was heard over the comms on the Finalizer along with blaster fire. Their
attacks were easily deflected as she flew through the scantily staffed bridge. Eager to be free, the darkness flowed through her and she moved effortlessly through the ranks. Soldiers fell dead as they struggled to reach for their blasters. The few that made it to the door didn’t have time to even attempt to unlock it before they too fell.

“Leave the comms open,” Hux ordered. He closed his eyes as he relished the screams and the whirring plasma buzzing through the air. “Listen closely- this is what the death of the Resistance sounds like.”

Ichara growled as a blaster bolt skimmed her face- she whirled around and forced the weapon from Leia's hands into her own, tucking it into her empty holster.

“Princess Leia Organa” she announced as she approached her “Crown jewel of the Rebellion. You have no idea how much respect I have for you- I truly hate that it has come to this. I understand that you would have served the Empire well.”

Her eyes were sad, tired. “The Empire is dead, sweetheart. Why would you do this? I don’t understand. For money? Is money really worth the price of what thousands will pay?”

Her laugh was cold, like ice shattering on stone. “The First Order rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the Empire. My grandfather’s ashes were in that fire too, Leia, resting alongside your father. You may have forgotten, but I have not.”

“The past is the past, Ichara, don’t die to honor their mistakes.”

“Mistakes... Like when the New Republic executed my grandfather for war crimes he didn’t even commit? Like when senators sent mercenaries after my family to settle their own personal grievances? Like when they stole the legacy my family built and leveled it to rubble?”

Leia’s brow furrowed. “You're Teshik’s granddaughter.”

“Yes. You’ll find, like him, I am fairly difficult to kill. Even when I took a lightsaber to the back from your coward of a son on Aleen, when your pathetic brother left me for dead and ran from the mess he made.” her voice reached a crescendo, and every word was spat from her lips as if they burned.

She ignited her saber and pointed at the general, staring down the blade with wild eyes, blood splattered across her face from the blaster bolt. Fists were beating at the bridge door, and she knew she was running out of time.

“Your family and the Republic took everything from me!” she screamed.

“Ichara… I am so sorry.”

The apology just stoked the inferno blazing in her heart.

“Sorry?? You should be! I am going to crush the Resistance, I am going to kill you, and then I am going to kill your son.”

She opened her mouth to reply, but the red saber plunged into her chest and stole her breath. She mouthed “I’m so sorry” one more time before falling to the ground.
“This was mercy, general. Ben is going to suffer before I’m through.”

Hux held his chin high, heart bursting with pride. She was his, this force was his, and he was unstoppable. *I am everywhere.*

He cut his eyes to look down at the captain beside him, slack jawed at this revelation of her lineage.

“Were you aware of this, sir?”

The egotistical grin threatened to crack his face in two “Of course.” he drawled.

*Ichara knelt down to slip the ring off her hand, then ran to punch in the override code Hux had given her and open the bridge doors. There were only a handful people outside, and she cut them down in a few strokes. She locked the door again behind her, and sprinted down the hallway towards the hangar- there was very little time.*

Kylo fell to his knees and clutched his chest. *No. No no no no no.* He squeezed his eyes shut as tears fell. *No no no no no.* The air rushed out of his lungs, it felt like time had stopped and he was suspended in a void of black nothingness. A hand cupped his face- he opened his eyes to see that he was kneeling over Leia. “No… mom… I’m so sorry, I-”

“Shh…” she whispered, managing a sad smile up at him “*I never stopped loving you, Ben.*”

Hacking sobs racked his body as he leant over her, staring in horror at the burned hole in her chest “I’m so sorry mom, I love you, I’m so sorry, I… no no no…”

And then she was gone.

He couldn’t hear how loud he wailed. He didn’t hear the plaintive cries, how he plead to the stars, how he bartered to some unknown god to trade his existence for hers. He didn’t feel the blood sticking gloves to his knuckles as he beat the floor with his fists.

Rey was sucked into the black hole of his desperate sorrow- this was unlike anything she had ever felt from him before.

She ran and put her arm over his shoulder as she knelt beside him “Stars, Ben! Ben look at me, what happened?? Ben!!”

“Sh-she’s gone. She’s dead.” He couldn’t look up at her and his voice was almost incoherent, choked with the anguish pouring out of him.

“Who’s gone? Ben, who’s dead?”

“My apprentice…She killed her, she…” he stood abruptly and ignited his saber; a guttural, inhuman sound was torn from the very core of his being. He howled like a wounded animal as he destroyed everything within reach. The darkness rippled, distorting reality around him like a heat wave in the desert.
Rey’s eyes went wide, and then she was back on the rebel ship. She took off down the hallway, screaming “The General is hurt! We have to get to the bridge! We have to-” she ran face first into Ichara, knocking them both flat.

Rey leapt to her feet. “You’re the apprentice! Ben told me what you did!”

Ichara stayed on the floor, bloodied face smiling as she looked up. The faux friendliness she’d adopted during her stay dropped from her tone, and Rey recognized the voice from the woods. “I don’t have time for your shit, desert girl.”

Rey reached out with the force and choked her. She knew it was the dark side- she could feel the slither of something black and inky seeming to crawl up the light inside of her, but she didn’t care.

“Augh! You little bitch.” she sputtered, “Don’t worry, I’m killing him next.” Ichara waved her hand and threw her against the wall. “Maybe you and I will have our day, but it’s not this one.” She took off running towards the hangar to commandeer a ship.

The force of the blow made her dizzy when the back of her head connected with the wall. With the knocked the wind from her lungs Rey was gasping as she struggled to stand, seeing two of everything as she stumbled towards the bridge. Red lights came on and alarms blared, signaling that someone had found the carnage.

Ichara quickly made her way to an X-wing closest to the bay doors, and almost blended in as people were scrambling about. Almost.

“Woah woah woah, I didn’t think that…” Poe’s jaw dropped when he saw her burned face. He pulled his blaster “Okay, I don’t know what you think you’re doing but you aren’t going anywhere.”

“Do you want to come with me? No, I thought not.” With a flick of her wrist she threw him back and turned to board the fighter.

"You let me down, 'chara!" He sat up and caught her in the back with a bolt from his blaster; she almost lost her balance, but was able to jump into the cockpit, wincing at the pain. Poe cursed and ran to find General Organa to let her know about the escape and see what was going on.

She threw a helmet on and powered the ship up, flying out into space.

“General, we have an incoming transmission from a rebel fighter.”

“Patch it through”

“Hux, I’m out. I’m in a red squadron X-wing, C9.”

“We’ll have shields down on bay seven. See you shortly. Once she clears the blast radius I want you to fire every weapon we have on that ship!”

In the commotion, the Finalizer’s comm officer had forgotten to close the open line to the bridge on the rebel ship, and Rey heard his commands as she forced the bridge door open.

“General Hux!” he stopped at the sound of the Rey’s voice, shaking with a grief-stricken rage “You are going to pay for what you’ve done!”
He made a point to laugh loudly “No. No I really don’t think I will. The Apprentice is likely clear of their ship, fire at will. Goodbye, Scavenger. You and your precious Princess will share the same grave.” he smiled to himself as he left the bridge.

“What a glorious day this is”.

Pipes burst and one area of the ship had been depressurized under the barrage.

“We need those shields up!”

“I’m trying!” Rose cried “Everything is locked! We have to find the physical spike she used.”

Rey moved without thinking and held her hand out to the console, channeling her will into the computer, through the wires. She could feel the enemy program like a pulsating cancer in the mainframe. One floor down sparks shot from a maintenance panel as the chips in the spike burned out.

“Whatever you did it worked!” Rose’s fingers flew across the console and brought the shields back online. “We have to go, before they lock onto our hyperdrive signature. If we’re here much longer they can track us.”

“Already on it!” With the tap of a few buttons, Poe grabbed the controls and the visualizer went from the First Order to blazing streaks as stars shot past them.

Rey ran to the medbay to check on General Organa, but her steps slowed as she neared. She didn’t want to see what she might find, what she knew she would find. She fell against the wall and slid down it as tears poured down her cheeks. Ben wasn’t the only one who loved her.

Streaks of molten metal still glowed orange across the walls. Kylo was crumpled in a heap on the floor, chest heaving, eyes swollen from tears. He rained down destruction until he was too exhausted to carry on, sobbed until he had nothing left to give, and cried until his voice was gone.

He was floating in his own body- numb.

He knew this was going to come one day. There was no other logical ending- it would be his life or hers. But still, somehow, he never really believed it. Perhaps it was that he couldn’t wrap his mind around the idea of his mother being gone. Truth be told, he’d never really thought that far. Snoke had always told him what to do, where to go, what to expect, and how things were going to turn out. Kylo only really ever had to exist and act. Nothing more.

It wasn’t just the pain of his mother’s death that wounded him to the core. He could feel, acutely, the dying bloom of the one golden hope he was forever too afraid to acknowledge.

His redemption.

Drained, he drifted into a dreamless sleep on the cold floor as the smouldering gouges cooled around him.

Rey tiptoed across the wreckage and pulled a blanket from his bed to drape across him, trying
desperately not to wake him.

*I’m going to save you, Ben Solo.* she whispered.

She assumed there was something left in that crumpled form that wanted to be 'saved'.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you guys liked this chapter! It was a wild one to write, and I'm not great at fight scenes so I hope it went okay! :)}
Event Horizon

Chapter Summary

Ichara has a gift for Hux... and a gift for Kylo. He'll find it when he wakes up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The rebel fighter looked so out of place in the Finalizer’s hangar; the dusty, piecemeal construction was a sharp contrast to the sterile conditions that surrounded it. The glass shell lifted, and Ichara winced as she peeled her herself from the seat, sticky with the blood oozing from the the pilot’s shot; it had hit just between the plating on her back. Her hair had come loose, tumbling in a wild array of wavy locks as she jumped from the cockpit. One side of her face was blackened, crusted with still-drying blood around a burn that started at her dimple and went back to her ear.

The first thing that hit as her feet touched the ground wasn’t the pride emanating from Hux like a beacon, but the spiraling pit of agony on the other side of the ship.

*Good.*

*Suffer.*

The searing blade that marked her back on Aleen set the first domino, and everything she had done since that day was adding one after another after another. The moment General Hux had walked into her cousin’s den of iniquity his polished boot knocked down that very first brick, and it had been constant motion since. Every click of her heel as she neared the smirking General was the sound of another brick falling, pushing ever closer to the end. Her family avenged, and freedom gained from the monsters of her past.

*The killer, the General, and her fleet.*

*No*

*The killer, the killer, the killer.*

She stopped a foot away from Hux, both standing with baited breath. The entire hangar was silent save the whirring of the machines, and he wondered if she could hear his heart pounding against his ribcage as he looked at her. She smiled wide despite the pain as her wound cracked open, fresh blood trickling down her jawline to disappear down her neck into her armor.

An officer coughed behind him and brought them both back to reality.

“General Hux, the Resistance captured me on Balamin as planned. Between your expert strategy and my abilities, I was able to strike down the General of the Resistance. Their leader is no more.”
stepped backwards and lowered to one knee, holding Leia’s blaster across her outstretched palms.

“I brought you a trophy of war, my General. Her blaster.”

His eyes sparkled as he took it from her, “Both efficient and thoughtful. Thank you, Teshik. With you in our ranks the First Order will truly be unstoppable.”

Her eyes shot up to him, nervous by the use of her name- she didn’t know that her interaction with Leia had been broadcast across the bridge. She rose shakily, and he moved to put an arm around her, fingers sinking into the bloody wound just out of sight. “Are you alright?” he asked softly so no one else could hear.

“I... think I need to go to the medical bay.”

He waved two troopers over to escort her. “I’ll be in my office preparing the official statement for our victory, find me when you’re more steady. I want to you tell me everything.” His fingers lifted her chin before he released her “You’re amazing” he whispered. For a moment he considered taking her mouth in his, making whatever it was they had together public knowledge, though the expressions on their faces said enough.

_No, there will be a time for that, and it will be glorious. Don’t be greedy, take one triumphant moment at a time and relish it._

The troopers that had come across them the other day were patrolling the upper floors that lined the hangar, and stopped for a moment to see her present the blaster to the General.

“Is… is that _romantic_ to people like them?”

“I half expected him to kiss her again, the weird thing they have going on isn’t exactly a secret.”

“What do you think they talk about?”

“‘How was your day honey? Oh it was great I picked on some stormtroopers and threw them at stuff for no reason.’ 'Ah good I yelled at everyone for things that aren’t their fault, lets go make out in a closet.’”

“You know I can’t even go get something from storage without being afraid they’re behind the doors? The manual didn’t include _that_ in the workplace hazards.”

As they were snickering an officer exited the lift near them and they snapped to attention, then returned to their patrolling.

_Ichara could have made more of a concerted effort to heal herself, but she was exhausted. She laid on her stomach, droids scampering across her back as they trimmed away burned flesh to apply bactagel. It was a wide injury but thankfully shallow due to wearing _proper_ armor, unlike the affair on Canto Bight. Despite the pain she closed her eyes and got the best sleep she’d had in the past few days. There was still so much more to do, and fumbling due to lack of rest wasn’t something to risk._
The Resistance held a secretive funeral for Leia on Naboo, where her mother was interred. The ceremony was short but beautiful, with Poe delivering a particularly heartfelt memorial. Between a recording of the ceremony sent out along Resistance networks and Hux’s insensitive, boasting of a speech, the fighters that remained found their resolve stronger than ever.

“The cowardly attack on both mine and the apprentice’s life on Canto Bight was an inexcusable act of treachery. It brings me great joy to announce that in this age of assassinating Generals the First Order was indeed successful. Our Supreme Leader’s apprentice, granddaughter of the Empire’s own Grand Admiral Teshik, not only avenged his death at the call of Leia Organa decades ago, but single handedly delivered a crushing blow to the loathsome Resistance by taking her life. Without their cherished leader, the figurehead from a time long passed, the galaxy will now see them for what they truly are- nothing more than a band of liars, murderers, and thieves.”

“I can’t stand to look at his horrid face anymore!” Rose smacked the button on the projector in the bridge. “When we win this war- and we will win this war, I’m gonna take his stupid coat and make him watch as I feed it to a bantha.”

“Make sure he’s still in it when you do, though.” Poe was doing his best to keep a sense of humor in the darkness of the situation, though murdering the General was something he was definitely looking forward to. “I still can’t believe it was her though. I actually didn’t think she was that bad, how did I not know? Is there something wrong with me?”

“No, Poe. She fooled all of us, even me and I’m supposed to be able to use the force” Rey’s stomach sunk as snippets of her conversations with the apprentice stuck out in her mind.

“I know Kylo Ren better than you ever will.”

“Well, he even bring you anyways, wouldn’t it make more sense for him to bring his apprentice?”

-“He did bring her.”

“I told him I hated him and punched him in the mouth. It was so worth it.”

-“My apprentice- if anything she proved her loyalty.”

Rey put her head in her hands and sighed. “I should have known... she basically told me.”

Poe patted her on the back. “That dark side stuff is tricky, don’t feel bad. Like you said, she got us all.”

The First Order left the base on Balamin untouched. After figuring out that Ichara had gotten captured intentionally and that the whole thing was a ruse, it made sense that they wouldn’t bother. They decided that the best bet would be to return to Balamin to recoup after their loss as it would be the place their enemies least expected. Their main ship was tucked away near the asteroid belt of the Alderaanian Graveyard (the remnants of the destroyed planet) while smaller ships were sent out to sympathizer planets to round up new recruits. The news of the underhanded way in which the First Order had killed their beloved General had done more to help the Resistance overall than hurt it.

Poe was giving orders with a smile and a quick joke as he sent people on their way, but the laughter didn’t reach his eyes. Rey came up behind him and put a hand on his back, doing the best she could to work up a smile for him. “Poe, you’re doing great. The General would have been proud.”
“I hope so, Rey. I don’t know what it is I’m doing, but I’m trying to do it the best I can.

“This thing, with Kylo… I’m doing my best to control it. I’m sorry I never told you.”

He turned to face her, putting a hand on each shoulder. “I believe you, Rey, but you have to let me know when it happens, and if there’s anything I can do… let me know. You’re not alone in this, I’m here for you- we’re all here for you.”

She nodded silently, not sure she could speak with the lump welling in her throat. She hid her face in his chest and he embraced her.

“Hey I’d hold you like this forever if it means he can’t get you, but that might make flying a little awkward.”

She laughed “I don’t think that’s how it works, but thanks anyways.”

Ichara was going to see Hux first, but curiosity got the better of her. She wanted to see the look on Kylo’s face, wanted to see how he would respond to her after everything. A part of her always feared she’d never get any of this done and that her life’s work would have been for nothing. Now that it was truly happening she was going to savor every single second she could as they passed.

She snuck into his quarters—it was almost pitch black save the emergency lights flickering. The living room was a disaster of mangled furniture, gouges marked the walls and the smell of burnt plasma still hung in the air. There was a low light in the library at the end of the hallway, and she could just make out his silhouette. She approached slowly, every muscle tense as crept towards him.

“I brought you something.” He didn’t respond.

“You’ve known there was only one way this could end, and I kept you from having her blood on your hands. You’re welcome.” He tightened his fists, but said nothing.

Kylo wanted to impale her the moment he felt her presence behind him. It was a cold fury that crackled beneath his skin, kept in check by an eerily rational control over his usually impulsive actions. He held himself back, letting every word from her mouth increase the pressure building inside him.

“I didn’t kill your pet scavenger either.” He took a deep, tremulous breath— the desire inside him clawing for release.

“How did you do it?” his voice was low and husky from the mourning he’d done the night prior. She expected he’d come for her with his saber, whirling and hacking away towards her, or at least an emotional display of force choking and yelling.

“We talked… and then I impaled her. It was quick.” She found his quiet demeanor unsettling, and decided to poke the bear. “I found my mother murdered when I was young, at least you didn’t have to see it.”

“I did see it. I heard her last breaths.”

She smiled behind him before quickly wiping it from her face. Stars, that’s even better. Her moment
of uncontrolled joy was a mistake.

“You’re... enjoying this.”

“I killed the General of the Resistance, I think I deserve to feel a little full of myself.”

“No... That wasn’t pride I felt. You’re enjoying my suffering.”

She knew she was toeing a dangerous line, (as well as going against the General’s timeline), but she just couldn’t help herself.

“Maybe I am.”

She ran her fingers through his hair before letting her hand drift down and settle on his lower back.

Kylo lifted his arm and put it around her shoulders, pulling her tight. She could feel the change in him as soon as she touched him, and her smug demeanor was quickly tainted by the rising tide of fear. He looked down at her, breath hitching in her throat at the golden streaks in the eyes staring into hers. The death of his mother had destroyed that last foothold of the light from within him. Ichara could feel its absence- the darkness had never flowed so freely through him. There was always that streak of light that seemed to pin the darkness in place, keeping it from going too far- like a chained dog pacing a circle.

Now it was set free to roam.

“I’m going to enjoy yours, too.”

He shoved her forward, pinning her against the transparisteel. One hand entwined in her hair and pulled her head to the side so she could see him from her peripheral. “I’ve spent every second since the moment I woke up deciding what I’m going to do with you.” The huskiness added a chilling effect over the deep baritone of his voice.

He yanked one shoulder of her robes down and pressed into her as he savagely bit down on the muscle just at the back of her neck, blood trickling down as the skin tore under the pressure.

She sucked in sharply at the pain, stifling a whimper. “And what did you decide?”

There was a popping noise as he pulled his mouth from her skin, and he paused to breathe heavily in her ear as he considered his answer. “Mmm. I didn’t... I just know that I want to hurt you... I want to feel you suffer and I want it to be my hands doing it.”

He spun her around, and her robes had slipped down enough to see the still healing bite Hux had left just below her collar bone. “Oh.” He ran a finger around the purple crescents. “Oh, it makes so much sense now. How did I not see it? You and your pet general.”

“I don’t care what you do to me, Kylo. My body is the only part of me you’ll ever get to touch.”

He pressed his forehead to hers, the fury in his eyes glittering like the facets of a diamond “It’s the only part I need to touch. Whatever’s inside you has been dead for years and you act like killing the galaxy will bring it back to life.”

“Bold words for someone that answers to the name of a dead boy.” He snarled and threw her to the ground, lightning pouring forth from his fingertips.
“You know nothing about me!”

She screeched as she writhed under the bolts, desperately reminding herself why she was there and drawing on that anger, drawing on the flames inside her head. She reached out to push back with a charge of her own and fought to stand, both trying to overwhelm the other.

“I know about Aleen, does that count?” He released his charge and she stood down, both panting from exertion.

“What did you say?!”

He was so caught in his fury he didn’t feel the light behind him.

“I know about Aleen, I know about what you did. Jedi killer.”

He dragged her to him and fell on top of her, both hands wrapped around her throat, teeth bared as he choked her, her own blood speckling her face as he yelled at her.

“I’m going to watch the life leave your eyes and I’m going to suck the last dying breath from your lungs, and once I taste the death on your lips I’ll have Hux kneel beside your corpse to make him beg for his life before I gut him and coat you in his blood. I’ll hack your bodies till you’re nothing more than a black char on the floor and I’ll leave it there to tread you under my boots as I conquer the galaxy.”

Through the pain, pride still rose. I did this. She weakly reached a hand up to his face and smiled at him. He snarled and squeezed even harder, but just before her fingertips could reach his neck a soft voice interrupted them.

“Ben?”

He released her and spun around to see Rey standing with a look of horror on her face. Ichara gasped in relief, lightheaded as air rushed back into her lungs.

“She killed my mother!”

“And you really think killing her is going to bring your mother back? Do you think that’s what she would have wanted? More death?”

Kylo rose to his feet, his expression hard to make out in the dim light in the room. “Does it matter what she would have wanted? She’s dead.”

Ichara managed a wheezing laugh from the floor. “I told you, stupid girl. You don’t know him at all.”

He straightened. “You should listen to her. Go.”

“Ben, you’re better than this, you’re not a monster.”

He stalked towards her; when he stepped into the light it illuminated his features and she recoiled from what she saw. A purple hue haunted rings underneath his eyes, the mahogany irises spiked with gold like the Sith she’d heard horror stories about as child, and his soft lips were smeared in blood
like an animal.

“Don’t think you can tell me what I am and what I am not.”

“Ben, wh-what happened to you?”

“My name... is Kylo Ren. I am the Supreme Leader of the First Order. You seem to forget this. I—”

His eyelids fluttered and he collapsed into a heap, revealing Ichara standing behind him with her hand outstretched.

“He needs to sleep it off, don’t you think?”

“What have you done you horrible beast!?”

“I killed the good man, and soon I’ll kill the monster, too. Now go back to your hole, scavenger.”

Rey flew backwards into the wall behind her as Ichara fired a volley of lightning at her, the force of the blow knocking her unconscious. It would be hours before Rose found her.

She rifled through his desk in the library and used his calligraphy set to write him a message. She rolled it up and tucked it into the ring she brought him.

_Hux is going to be pissed._

She made her way to her quarters and sent him a quick message.

-

_Kylo and I had words, it’s moved forward. I’m meeting him there in 2 hours, I’ll message when he’s there. My apologies._

-

She pulled out the old chest from beneath her bed and popped the secret drawer at the bottom open. After running her finger over the old badge in the bottom, she reached to the far back, pulling a small ribbon to open a hidden door. A second saber rolled out when she pulled her hand away.

“Hello, other old friend.”

She tucked a cylinder Hux had given her into her boot and straightened her robes. There wouldn’t be any armor or any added advantage for this battle.

_If he kills me, I deserved it._

She sucked the life from an unfortunate trooper that joined her in the lift, healing her wounds, and made her way to their training room to wait for the coming storm.

-

Hux’s good mood was half ruined when he returned to his office to find that the rebel ship had escaped destruction. His holopad buzzed and gave him one more irritation to add to it.

“Oh for fucks sake, beast.”

“Excuse me, General?”
“We’ll have to finish the conversation later this evening, Senator Firus, something has come up that must be addressed immediately. I apologize.”

The senator of Arkanis was being difficult about what Hux was asking for, and having to cut off negotiations halfway through setting everything up was an incredible inconvenience. “Now it’s just going to cost me even more. Wonderful. I suppose you can’t put a price on glory though, can you.” he smirked.

“You” he waved a guard over. “Go get Phasma. Tell her it’s time- we’ve found the traitor.”

Phasma literally dropped what she was doing at the news, leaving a trooper on the other side of the crate they were moving to stumble with the sudden shift in weight.

“Understood. Let the General know it is being done.”

She marched over to a control panel and punched sent a message addressed to only one captain, but popped up across the garrison communication boards. “Captain Belgarid, I will be unable to complete my shift due to illness. Report to bay 3-C immediately to cover. -Cpt. Phasma.”

Select soldiers across the ship sent out similar messages, all seeming to ‘accidentally’ post across the entire board. Phasma checked and made a mental note of each name to ensure all of her most efficient soldiers would be in attendance. She was waiting in the large storage area one level above their training room that she’d had cleared just for this purpose. She smiled under her helmet, watching as her handpicked troops shuffled in. When he makes me general, I think I’ll wear the bands on my armor. Dramatic coats wouldn’t suit me.

She returned to adjusting the sight on her blaster, waiting for Hux to arrive.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you guys don’t mind my indulgence of goofy stormtroopers, they crack me up :P
The Girl who Lived

Chapter Summary

A lot of shouting and swinging.

Hux & Phasma get to revel a bit.

(Kittât is the runic language of High Sith)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He blinked slowly, cheek stuck to the cold floor before shoving himself upright, eyes searching the room. His mind was still caught in the moment right before Ichara fainted him. He wiped the sticky mixture of blood and drool from his face and checked the time- he estimated he’d been out for little over an hour. In front of him was a small cylinder of parchment tucked inside a gold ring. When he saw the two circular stones that adorned it, he recognized it as the one his mother used to wear. He slipped it off and rolled it in the palm of his hand, remembering how the metal would catch the light as she raised her fist during rousing senate speeches when he was young.

She’s dead now.

The tink of metal on metal echoed in the quiet room as Kylo let it fall to the floor. He unfurled the parchment, the harsh runes of kittât leaving little guess as to who it was from. “We will finish this. Training room. 1800.”

He went to the refresher, stopping to observe the reflection over the running water. With Snoke’s death, and now his mother gone, anyone whose expectations he had a glimmer of respect for were gone. This is what it looks like to be free.

-  

When the doors opened he saw that she was in the middle of the sparring pad meditating. She tapped a button on the holopad in her lap, tossed it to the side, and returned to her meditation. The audacity shown in her under-reaction to his presence only served to make him angrier. He called out as he approached her, the edge of adrenaline sharpening with every step.

“You’ve started a fight you’re not going to walk away from this time, Ichara. There won’t be your General or any other distractions to save you”

“Are you even going to ask why?” There was a smoothness, an out-of-place serenity to her voice.

“The only question I have is ‘Am I going to kill you’, and I already know the answer to that.” She could feel the darkness near as he strode towards her.

“The scar down my back…you gave me that on Aleen… when you took everything from me.”

He stopped at the edge of the ring. “Wait. You’re…” he struggled to remember. Most of that night
had been pushed away so long that fragments had been lost.

“...You don’t even remember my name...” she laughed and shook her head. “It really was that easy for you, wasn’t it.”

She opened her eyes, using the force to draw herself up to her feet. “The chosen one- run off to play prince of darkness and have the powers of the universe laid at his feet, while I was left in the rubble to fight and claw for every scrap of knowledge I could find. I earned my power.”

He bristled at this, anger pulling him out of his shock. “You don’t know what I went through to get here, don’t you dare.”

“I might not know all of it, but I have seen what it did to you. The world was far crueler to you than I could ever have hoped to be- I resent it for that.” What could almost be described as a shadow of sadness passed over her face. “You really don’t remember?”

He swallowed nervously. Rage still ran thick through his veins like magma, but there was a shame in that night that still clung to him through it all.

She held out a hand clawed out before her. “Here, I’ll show you.”

“You have to come with me, we’re going. There is nothing here for us.” The voice was familiar... it was his voice.

“What? I... I don’t know what you’re talking about, I have to-”

“There is no time for this.” He could hear the hum of his old saber, before he corrupted it into the crackling red beam it was now. A young woman screamed, the sound of embers crackled. The flames she always focused on now made sense.

“Adrestia.” he whispered. Now that he knew, he didn’t know how he couldn’t have seen the girl from his past in her face. The light behind her eyes had since died, though; his memory was of a girl that hadn’t yet been maimed by the world... maimed by him. “I used to call you...” he couldn’t finish the sentence.

“What did you call me after that night? Dead? Forgotten?” she asked indignantly, the calmness in her voice steadily being replaced with anger. “Now you can call me death.”

She reached behind her to the double holster across her back, igniting a blade on each side of her.

“You had two sabers the whole time, didn’t you. Just like you did back then.”

“Never tip your hand” she winked “Your father should have taught you that.”

He ignited his saber with a growl... but waited. The pair circled, sidestepping, waiting to see who would strike first. She intended to tire him first this time and wanted to start on the defensive.

“I meant to kill you after I left your mother slain. I can’t decide if it was a weakness within myself, or if it was because I returned to a shattered boy instead of a worthy enemy.” Her voice dripped with contempt, hoping to lure him into starting on the offensive.

He took her words in, focusing on the hate that bubbled up inside of him. “It was your weakness.
Forever afraid of everything around you… always hiding- behind lies, behind that mask, behind Hux. You’re a coward.”

She snapped first, the crackle of sabers thundering in their ears as he blocked her double swing upwards. She had invested all their sparring time in studying how he fought, though, and she anticipated the force; going limp-wristed and letting her sabers dip down. He stumbled forward and she flicked one blade up and over, slicing into his shoulder.

He roared in frustration, and his heavy underhanded swing was caught between the x-crossed form of her sabers.

“Coward? You attacked me from behind! You will always be a coward!” she screamed through the crackling intersection of their blades. She shifted to the side, pushing him away from her as she forced his weapon to the ground.

Things he had admonished her for were soon apparent to be her strengths, and though he was unprepared for fighting her with the two sabers he was adapting to it. Her previously awkward, lopsided fighting style made sense with the second blade. The power of both arms balanced out his brute strength, and the speed at which she wielded the two blades was impressive as she danced around him. In a strange way he was enjoying himself.

In staying low to the ground, the additional effort he spent in lowering himself to deflect threw him off balance. He recovered and took a page from her book, swinging low. It surprised her and he caught the side of her thigh as she did her best to change positions. She gasped at the pain, but spun around through the blow, catching him in the leg as she mirrored his attack with a backhanded stroke.

He yelled out and retreated a couple steps back to recover his stance, spinning his saber at his side. She pointed at him with her sabers and shouted all the while. “You and your dead family ruined my life- every breath I’ve taken has been with the hope of retribution.”

“I’m sorry for Aleen, it wasn’t my fault!” He yelled it across the blades without thinking, but to him it was true. The dark whispers inside him had always been there, but he would never have acted as he did if Luke didn’t try to kill him. It was a panicked mania that overtook him that night when he went through the students. Everything was so urgent, so black and white.

He thought back then that he hated Luke for being afraid of his power. After Luke’s absence and the battle on Crait, he realized the hate was for pushing him into the arms of the dark side… and the brutal suffering he endured to become what he is now. All the horrible things in his life went back to that night- and he realized hers did, too.

The apology quickly followed by the denial of guilt spurred her on “You don’t get to apologize now! It’s all your fault! You couldn’t take responsibility for what you did, so I’m taking it for you. You deserve to die, Kylo Ren. Let this be the one thing you endure with dignity!” He caught another one of her double bladed swings and flung them back, lifting fast enough to make her stumble.

She pushed herself back with the force and let go of her sabers, letting them fall to the ground as she whispered, holding her palms out toward him. The air around him seemed to solidify into stone, pressing him to his knees. His saber sputtered, sending molten sparks flying as his blade was forced into the ground. She plucked her sabers from the floor and strode over to him, kicking the hilt from his hand.
With great effort he was able to move his face up, glaring up at her over the intersection of her crossed blades, each tip hovering inches on each side of his face.

Through grinding teeth she struggled to speak, her jaw clenched as she used every bit of power she had to hold him in place. “There was a moment... where I was the only person in the galaxy... who could understand you for what you are. You broke that spell of weakness... and I thank you. A part of me would always hate myself... if I’d forgiven you.”

She stepped back and raised her arms as if they were angels wings, twin sabers pointing to the ceiling to swoop down in a graceful killing stroke. There was something akin to relief in his eyes, and it stole some of the bite from her hate. He felt her falter at this, and broke free from her grasp just as the doors opened.

“What the hell are you doing!?” It was Hux. Phasma strode in just behind him, flanked with his ten Elite guard, and thirty troopers pouring in either side of them branched out to form a semicircle, surrounding them. He’d been following their fight on his holopad, watching for a signal that never came. He waited until he was worried she might end up killing him here and now.

“Stand down, Ichara.” She sheathed her sabers and stepped away, offering a hand to help Kylo up from the floor. He ignored it and stood on his own.

He was panicking, not entirely sure if Hux was saving his life or here to take it. Despite his strength in the force, there were a formidable amount of guards with their weapons drawn. Whatever was happening, it had clearly been planned. He summoned his saber from the floor and took a deep breath, focusing himself, readying to strike.

“General Hux.”

Hux narrowed his eyes, his voice sounding slightly unhinged as he yelled at them, hands balled into fists at his side. It was like all the hate he’d ever had for Kylo was forced into the one word.

“Traitor!”

Kylo couldn’t tell if Hux was addressing himself or Ichara, but he had a sinking feeling he knew who it was. There was a rustle behind him followed by a pinch at the back of his neck, a searing pain blossoming down his spine. Ichara had pulled the cylinder from her boot, twisting it to expose a pressurized needle loaded with tranquarest, the only sedative said to be strong enough to sedate a Jedi knight. She assumed it would do the same for him, too.

It was fast-acting, and the General’s words were already starting to blur together. “Kylo Ren, you are under arrest for conspiring with the Resistance to assassinate both your apprentice and myself on Canto Bight. I’m sure there’s a litany of other treasonous deceptions I’ll add as we find them.”

Kylo’s saber slipped from his fingers, clattering to the ground. He tried to reach his arm out to kill the shouty orange blur in front of him, but even the force itself seemed like it was swaying; it felt limp, like an overcooked Corellian buckwheat noodle. He pictured killing Hux with a force made of noodles and almost laughed as he fell backwards. She caught him, one hand still wobbling out as he attempted to focus on Hux, trying to squint through the spinning. She whispered over his shoulder as she gently lowered him to the ground. “You used to call me Tia.”

She retrieved his saber and Phasma took two guards to collect him. She ordered them to hold and stared down at him before kicking him sharply in the ribs.
“No response. Take him to interrogation.”

Ichara approached the General, dramatically bowing low. “I hope I have served you well, General Hux, sir.”

“Stop being ridiculous.”

She was taken aback at his tone, but when she looked up he was smirking. “You have served your *Supreme Leader* excellently, dear.”

“A little soon don’t you think, Hux? The man’s been deposed for less than a minute.”

He held his hand out to her, “I think we can both agree that he hasn’t been a leader for quite some time.” They walked arm in arm behind the two troopers dragging Kylo with Phasma behind them.

“I’ll ensure he’s secured the way we discussed. We can’t risk failure, not this far in.” Since the scavenger had escaped the interrogation rooms Hux had doubled security, but they’d never had to contain something as frightful as Kylo.

“Good. If he escapes I’m afraid I will literally lose my mind.”

“I’ve spoken with the doctor, and he assures me that in his state escape would be physically impossible.”

“Well, I need to heal and shower the smell of him off me. I’m fairly tired of having holes poked in me, let’s hope this is the last of it for some time.” They reached the lift, and her hand lingered down his arm as they parted. “Call on me when you’re ready.”

His hand caught hers and pulled her back to him, the other hand cupping her face as he kissed her. The guards shifted nervously and looked away, and when he pulled back she stared at him, speechless.

“I’ll see you soon.” He smiled at the shocked look on her face before joining Phasma in the lift. Once the doors closed Phasma sighed, shaking her head at him. “Was that really necessary?”

His eyes cut over to her, positively radiating smugness. “Probably not, but I did it anyways.”

The officers at the brig security station leapt to their feet at the rare sight of Hux in their midst. They were visibly confused at the sight of Kylo Ren being drug behind him.

“You will monitor him 24/7, and there will be four guards outside of his room at all times. No one comes in or out without my permission. This situation stays discreet. Any deviation or failure to adhere to my orders will be punishable by death. Is that understood?”

“Yes sir, I’ll make preparations.” Once they disappeared into the cell, the officers had a short discussion on whether or not their actions would technically be treason. They decided it was best to back the one walking around and in charge than the sedated force user. “Besides, how do we know he wouldn’t just kill us when he woke up?”

The troopers adjusted the interrogation chair into a reclined position and drug his massive form onto
it, having to make last minute adjustments to account for his size.

“Ensure everything is properly locked. Prisoners don’t escape under my orders.”

Hux stood across from him, a sadistic glint in his eye as his gaze ran over every restraint. A nurse stepped forward to fit a collar to his neck, designed to inject him with sedative at steady intervals to keep him subdued.

“He will be coherent though, yes?”

“It will come and go. He’ll likely be most awake before his hourly injection. According to the doseage it will be enough to keep his abilities at bay.”

“Good. You’re all dismissed.”

Phasma walked over to stand beside him, the pair staring at the sleeping knight.

“We did it.”

“Indeed we did.”

“You should have let her kill him. I would have done it if I were her. It doesn't feel right, having him penned up like this.”

“It was bad enough that scavenger girl taking credit for killing Snoke. If we’re going to dispatch the other half of the old leadership it’s good to do it on our own terms. Publicly. Besides... I want to be the one to do it.”

“Understandable.”

“I’m arranging an official ceremony on Arkanis to celebrate our ascension in ranks.”

“Meaning what?”

“Meaning you need to find your replacement and make arrangements. I would still very much like you on this ship, but I’ll remain here so it would be redundant. I was considering giving you the Horizon if that would interest you... General Phasma.”

“Perhaps.” she remained aloof, saving her excitement for later. “Don’t stare at him too long, I believe you have a ‘report’ to collect.”

Hux stayed behind after she left. He stood like a statue, watching for a flicker of life to signal that he was waking. Finally his eyelids fluttered open.

Kylo was so confused, finding himself laid back at an odd angle, groggily pushing against restraints. He was busy looking down, trying to see where he was when Hux’s sharp voice broke his concentration.

“Comfortable?”

“Huxssssssss” It was difficult to get his mouth to form the word, and he hung onto the ‘x’ with a hiss.
“It’s actually Supreme Leader now, but yes.” He stepped till he was almost touching him, reaching out to hold his chin and stare into his eyes. “You’ve been bested.”

Kylo bared his teeth, only managing a frustrated exhale in response.

“I won, Kylo Ren. Even with all your mystical abilities you were still no match for me. Just as pathetic as I’d always suspected.”

Kylo narrowed his eyes, trying to focus on the force, but it still evaded his grasp. “‘Chara… where…”

“She’s waiting on me to discuss your execution. We can’t quite come to an agreement on how to, well, execute the execution” he laughed. Hux leant in closer, obscuring his face from the camera in the corner of the room, and moved this thumb along Kylo’s lower lip, slipping his thumb between his teeth and hooking it behind his lower incisors, pulling him inches from his face. “And I promised to fuck her in the ashes of the Resistance… it seems high time for it, I’d say.”

“I’ll-kill-her-kill-you.” His sentence came out as one word, blurred together as he spoke around the leather in his mouth.

He snorted at the slurred taunt and released him. “Ren, your days of threatening me are over. Go back to sleep.”

Hux did his best not to yelp as he backhanded him. The force of his blow startled even himself, and he tried to shake feeling back into his hand as he returned to the lifts.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhhh I hope you guys liked this chapter, it was difficult to write for a myriad of reasons, me being super indecisive and super attached to all my baddies is one of them, lol

(I’m working on a Kylux fic too and it was really hard for me to not put some evil Kylux in at the end lmao)
The Peak of Pride

Chapter Summary

*finally got this beta'd, sorry for the errors!*  
I wanted to post this for fic author appreciation day :) I appreciate the heck out of my readers and wanted to post something a little early, I hope you like it!

Rey is being troublesome

Annnd also some indulgent smut for the sake of being extra

Aside from some soreness and a blossoming bruise under her hairline (and the nagging desire to know what happened after she left), Rey had recovered from Ichara’s assault. She was sitting on a table in the medbay in a huff, irritated that no one would take her word for it as droids poked and prodded at her.

“I don’t understand how it was even possible. Maybe because the bond works through the force and she used a force power? Kylo was able to choke her on the Falcon.”

Poe crossed his arms, doing his best disappointed-father face. “I told you to get me if it was going to happen again, Rey, and you didn’t.”

“I already told you that’s not how it works, Poe! I didn’t kriffing know!” She wasn’t being entirely truthful. After the intensity of Kylo’s reaction to his mother’s death, she was both worried for him and curious as to how Ichara’s return would be handled. Clearly not well. His anger had been glowing hot at the edge of her awareness ever since, distracting her like the dull ache of a hangnail. She’d stepped into a utility closet to seek him out, and Rose almost tripped over her unconscious form when she went looking for a diatum core for a project.

He sucked on his bottom lip for a minute as he thought things over. “Hmm. Well you’re staying with me, then. 24 hour watch. No more of him creeping in your head.”

“So you’re babysitting me?”

“I’m making the safety of you and the Resistance a priority, Rey. Call it what you want.”

She sighed, letting her head fall to her chest as she resigned herself to being a prisoner yet again. “Have you heard anything on the news circuits? Did the First Order release any statements?”

“Nothing other than Hux being a shouty orange windbag as usual, but no, nothing about a change in command.”

“She said she was going to kill him. I don’t know if she’s strong enough, but he was out before I came back.”

He shrugged “And? Let her. Hell, maybe they’ll kill each other and we’ll be the only ones with the Force on our side.”
“We have the light on our side, Poe, that’s more than they’ll ever have, no matter how many minions Kylo finds.”

Happy beeps came from the old medical droids, signaling that her examination was over.

“Well they say you’re fine, so hop to your feet- I have stuff to do and you’re coming with me.” Rey slid off the table to follow him through the base. She knew she had to seek Kylo out again to see what happened, but it would be difficult to do now that she was under supervision.

Some of Ichara’s deepest reflections seemed to be had propped up against smooth black wall of the shower. Everything happened so fast, and her anxiety told her it may be a little too fast.

Organa was dead; her fleet in headless disarray, and Ben Solo would be dead soon.

Soon.

“I should have killed him” she whispered to the water. “When I had the chance I should have just done it.”

Sometimes she was her own worst enemy, and the “what-ifs” crept into her mind, determined to suck the joy from her moment of triumph.

*What if he escapes, what if Hux turns on you, what if you have a heart attack and drop dead.*

“Stop.” She put her face under the running water, focusing on the white noise of it as it cascaded down, centering herself. “Tonight is going to be a good night. You’ve earned it.”

She went through her things to find a deep red silken blouse, a black skirt with a high split, and a simple pair of flats. It was… odd... like she was performing the parody of a ‘normal’ person. For just a night, she wanted to be free of her boots, her armor, and everything that was a testament of her dedication to vengeance. Tonight she would simply exist as herself… though she halfway wasn’t sure she even knew who that was.

Kylo’s saber sat on her bed beside her own, her eyes drifting over it as she dressed. She picked it up, running a finger down the open wiring on the side. Just like him, the hilt was massive and at first it looked to be an amalgam of strange mismatched pieces; but after staring at it for a moment, there was a purposeful grace to its construction. She ran her thumb over the activator button, but couldn’t bring herself to summon the crackling blade... it would almost feel disrespectful.

“You’re being ridiculous.” She held it out in front of her and depressed the button. The amount of vibration surprised her, and it took a concerted effort to hold it steady.

Kylo’s eyes opened slowly, and he stared into the wall in front of him.

*This isn’t over.*

His voice crept into her mind; she dropped the hilt and yelped, jumping back as if it had suddenly become red hot. It fell to the floor and she stared at it like she’d seen a ghost.

The crystal tugged at his mind when she turned it on and he squinted through the haze to find it.
Kylo could almost make out her form in front of him, his saber in her clutches. There was a small high pitched whine as the cylinder filled, followed by a hiss as the needle in the collar injected him again. He tried to claw at reality, but the slipping down proved to be unstoppable every time. He was floating in his own body, a prisoner in the cold dark pit inside of himself.

A chime at her door distracted her. She picked the hilt up and tried to shove it in the bottom drawer of her old chest, but it was too wide, so she just tossed it back on the bed.

The door opened to reveal Hux, looking more smug than she thought was humanly possible.

“May I invite you for a drink? We need to discuss the creature we have in our basement.”

They gloated as they made their way, arm in arm, back to his quarters. As she suspected he wasn’t going to let her off the hook for pushing their time schedule forward.

“Was there a particular reason you went to him before our agreed upon time?”

“I didn’t expect things to escalate the way they did- I’d never seen him like that. I messaged you as soon as I knew what was happening.”

“You were going to kill him, weren’t you.”

“I wanted him to think I was- I had to see it in his face, and I did. I wasn’t going to ruin our plans, Hux, after all this you could have some faith.”

“I’d have been quite put out if you’d lopped his head off. A good old fashioned public execution is something I think the three of us deserve.”

“You know for a second he thought you were there to save him?”

“Stars the man’s a bigger idiot than I thought.”

“He’s so self-absorbed that he was oblivious to everything. To be honest it’s scandalous I got away with what I did at all.”

When they reached his quarters he paused sheepishly. “Ah, mind the cat.”

“Don’t worry, they’re naturally attuned to the darkside… It’s a joke.” He looked up at her in concern, as if he’d secretly had a force-sensitive cat in his midst the whole time.

Her eyes drifted across the sparsely decorated room- it was as she expected. A few award plaques hung on the wall, a desk to the right had an excessive amount of neatly stacked data pads, and a lone ice-blue couch to the left had one chair near it. It barely looked like anyone lived there at all. He was a man who lived in his head and his holopad; this was just a place where he had to store himself outside of work.

Hux pulled a decanter off the shelf beside his desk and had to go to his kitchenette to find another glass. He’d never had anyone else drink with him here, let alone visitors at all, to be honest. He poured each of them a glass of whiskey filled almost to the brim. The last time he’d pulled off something this big was when Phasma killed his father for him.

They sat down and picked up their drinks, both clearing most of it in one gulp. For a moment they
sat clutching rocks glasses, each staring off, lost in their own minds.

“The Resistance is all but dead. General Organa is dead. Soon Kylo will be dead.” She looked over to him, an expression of amazement on her face as if it was sinking in for the first time. “I’ll have done what I set out to do.”

“The First Order is finally mine. I am the sole leader of my army.”

“I couldn’t have done this without you, Hux.”

He smiled, “I’m sure I could have eventually done this myself, but you certainly helped.”

She laughed “You’re an ass.” She moved closer and he put an arm around her.

“If you’re just now realizing this I’ve fiercely overestimated your abilities.”

She finished her drink and leant forward to set the glass on the table, settling back under his arm and looking up. “This is all so surreal, isn’t it. I’m so afraid I’m about to wake up back on Bakura and find out this was all a dream.”

He set his glass down and turned to cup her cheek in his hand. “If this is a dream, I will hunt you down and have you arrested for treason.”

Hux kissed her, the warmth from the alcohol not the only cause for the heat rising inside of him. He half stood, pushing her onto her back across the couch, his hands slipping beneath the split in her skirt to pull lace undergarments out of his way and toss them to the floor. He was back on her in a flash, and she moaned into his mouth as she felt his fingers enter her.

As her breathing started to quicken, he moved the skirt out of the way with his other hand, moving down to dip his tongue into her. She grabbed the couch, nails digging into the fabric as he moved in tandem with his fingers, teasing her with slow, lazy circles. The feeling of his hot breath between her thighs heightened the sensation and only served to torment her more.

She ran her fingers through his hair and he pulled away.

“No, beast. You hold your hands above your head and you wait.” She whined with impatience but did as she was told. Just as he could feel her start to tighten around him he would still, lapping at her with his tongue so gently that the denial almost hurt. Her legs began to tremble despite her best efforts to stay composed. He kept her just on that precipice, drinking in every soft lamentation as he slowed.

“Hux... oh Hux... please...”

He loved the sound of his name on her lips in such a pleading, breathless tone. He sucked at her playfully before covering her with his mouth, humming against her as she came. Her back arched, and he could hear her fingernails digging into the couch. “Stars... Hux... Hux.... fuck... I.... ah!”

She reached down to him but he grabbed her wrist and pinned it to the back of the couch. He was drawing her orgasm out, applying perfect pressure to her most sensitive points, refusing to let her come down. She wailed and he pushed into her harder, determined to make her a quivering mess before he went any further. Wave after wave crashed over her, and she was almost lightheaded from gasping. Just when she thought she couldn’t take any more he stilled, slowly flicking at her with his
tongue, her thighs involuntarily twitching with every contact.

He crawled over the top of her, a smug grin on his face.

“Are you quite alright?”

She threw her arms around his neck. “I don’t think you need to the force to be able to answer that.” She kissed him deeply, tasting herself on his lips. He reached between them and fumbled with his buckle for a minute before freeing himself.

She cried out against his lips as he pushed into her, oversensitive and incredibly wet. The feeling pushed him even closer towards a quickly nearing edge as he moved inside her slowly, trying not to finish so soon. In this gentleness was an intimacy neither had shared before.

She put a leg over his lower back, pushing him into her and holding him there, her irises nothing more than thin rings of gold as she looked up at him. “Stars you’re perfect” she whispered, pulling down on his shoulders to access his neck, determined to suck a mark that would peek just above his collar.

“Don’t ever leave me again.” he didn’t know where the words came from, he just said them without thinking.

“Never again.” she whispered, nipping his earlobe.

His hips moved more sharply, and he pressed the side of his face into hers. “Never again.” he breathed, and her hand reached up to grab the back of his neck, holding him to her, heavy breaths panting in her ear as he came with a few forceful thrusts.

She ran her fingernails across his back in slow strokes, working soft kisses along his neck. He pulled back to look down at her, like he was seeing her for the first time. The gravity of everything was starting to pull at him and he felt a little overwhelmed. “W-would you like another drink?”

She grinned, “Why not? We’re celebrating after all.”

After a few more libations into the evening Ichara was laid across his lap, Hux stroking her hair as she told the story from her brief stay with the Resistance.

“I’ve never seen an organization run so... informally... I guess you could say. It’s no wonder they’re so hard to get rid of. Even on the base half of them just looked like civilians. It’s a mess.”

“The ever-present scourge of guerilla warfare. It’s uncivilized and incredibly difficult to eradicate. There’s no honor in it. On Canto Bight you mentioned the Solo boy, was he there? He’d take over for his mother, wouldn’t he?”

She sat upright, smirking. “That’s right, I forgot- I have one more bit of information I was holding back as a surprise. I couldn’t risk Kylo Ren picking up that you knew.” She ran a fingernail softly down his chest and bit her lip. “Kylo Ren is Ben Solo.”

His eyes widened in shock. “You can’t be serious, you’re tooling with me.”

“I’m deadly serious. That’s why Snoke was so invested in him- he’s a Skywalker, the son of Han Solo & General Organa.”
“The Vader obsession makes so much more sense now…” he muttered. “So we’ll have defeated her and her son, truly putting an end to the lines of their regime and the Resistance itself. Brilliant.” He took her hand and pulled her up from the couch with a sly grin. “We’re going to the bedroom for this.”

They quickly undressed at the foot of his bed, and with a flourish of her arm she tossed him onto the bed, holding out her hand to pin his hands above his head. She knew the use of the force irritated him, but she couldn’t help herself.

“No, General Hux, Sir... You hold your hands above your head and you wait.”

He frowned, pulling against the bonds with a low grumble, but as she kissed up the inside of his thighs it was glaringly apparent he didn’t mind. He was already half erect and she took him into her mouth, applying a gentle suction as he thickened between her lips. She lavished him with her tongue, making a point to be just as torturously slow as he was earlier. He whispered curses when she pushed him to the back of her throat, slowly pulling back till he was out of her mouth, the tip just resting on her extended tongue as she looked up at him. He was staring down at her and biting his bottom lip so hard he thought it might bleed.

She lowered herself down onto him again, swallowing him into her throat and moving her head in small circles, letting him feel every bit of her. The salty taste of precum coated the back of her tongue and she released him, kissing up his soft stomach, lingering to flick her tongue along a pink nipple. He pulled against the invisible restraints again and sucked air sharply between clenched teeth.

She trailed kisses to his neck, then brought her hips down slowly, whispering praises as she took him into her. "Nothing in the galaxy can compare to you, Armitage …” She hardly ever used his first name, and before he could begin to formulate an opinion on it he felt teeth on his neck and she took his entire length into her. "You're perfect, I want nothing else. Just you.” The praise went right to his head, and all he wanted to do was pull more words from her. She moved earnestly atop him, savoring the way he filled her so exquisitely. In the distraction of her own enjoyment, the hold on his wrists faltered.

With his freedom he moved like a tiger, rolling over and looming above her, one hand holding her jaw firmly. “Get my crop, beast, then I want you on your hands and knees.” She smirked and held up a hand, summoning it from the other room before doing as she was told, golden eyes watching him over her shoulder.

“Y ou do not order me, beast.” every word was punctuated with a strike, and every strike elicited a gasp from the woman beneath him.

“Yes, General Hux, sir.” she hissed

He snaked his hand around her face and opened her jaw, inserting the crop between her teeth.

“Hold this.” He kept his hands on each side, pulling back gently but firmly, before sinking into her in one thrust. The stem of the crop vibrated in his hands as she moaned against it. He applied pressure with every push, holding it like a bit in her mouth. “Mine” he whispered, leaning down to kiss the weeping droplets of blood that blossomed along the welts, wondering if being a force sensitive had something to do with how intoxicating it was. He lowered himself till his full weight was on her back as he moved inside her, whispering his thoughts aloud.
Hux pulled the crop from her teeth and pulled her to the side, staying behind her as he lifted one leg over him, reaching his hand over her hip to move his fingers in unison with every push. She whimpered at the extra sensation and the air around him buzzed; he could feel himself getting caught up in her own climax. He wanted to see her face though, to drink in every expression and every keening sigh. He quickly moved atop her, his lips crashing into hers hungrily as his hips rolled between her thighs.

She dug her nails into his back, pressing crimson crescents into his pale skin whispering mindlessly as she edged closer, “It was always you… Hux... it could only ever be you… oh Hux... Hux!” Her body shuddered as she came around him, teeth sinking into his shoulder as if it would help hold him to her. He grabbed her shoulder for leverage, and slid the other arm around her waist, pushing into her as hard as he could.

“You’re mine, beast, forever, you’re mine, you’re mine, you’re mine.” The words were intermixed with his labored breathing, and he repeated them like a prayer, stars in the edge of his eyes as his own orgasm hit with her crying out beneath him. He pushed her into the mattress, wanting to put himself as far inside her as he could, as if he got deep enough he’d be a part of her forever.

The steady rise and fall of her chest underneath his arm told him that she’d fallen asleep. He was exhausted but his mind was still active, trying to settle the files of the day before he could rest; hovering somewhere between consciousness and sleep.

In the past he had begrudgingly entertained the idea of a marriage for alliances, but did the best he could to never stoop to that level. In his opinion a true tactician could get what he wanted without such primitive means. He’d met many women he’d respected, but none he desired to spend an extended period of time with. There was always a bigger project, or something more important for him to address, and he never found pursuing a relationship worth the distraction from his war machine.

Hux had found the perfect combination of woman and war in her.

Ichara was unhindered by the small perspectives that so limited others in his view. Just as he dedicated his life to building the First Order, she’d dedicated her life to her own militaristic pursuit-one that against staggering odds she’d completed. And just like him, she had to be ruthless to do it.

“I didn’t think a creature like you existed.” he mumbled, pulling her closer to him. She hummed in her sleep and softly took ahold of his hand, running her thumb along his knuckles. He kissed the raised scar on her shoulder and settled behind her. It was the first time he’d fallen asleep with someone in his arms, and it was nowhere near as irritating as he had assumed it would be.

Poe was busy going over parts orders with a soldier, and Rey used the opportunity to slip behind a shipping canister. “Technically I haven’t left him, so he can’t get too grumpy.”

When Rey reached out the first time she couldn’t find him. It was like following a path that eventually got so overgrown you couldn’t tell where it ended. She closed her eyes and tried harder; focusing on his face, the way he felt, the sound of his voice, anything that could pull her towards him.

He was a blur.
It was faint, but she could almost make out the shape of him. Like adjusting the lens of a camera, she pushed and pulled on the force until he finally came into focus. She was devastated by what she found.

“Ben…” His head was lolled to the side, double restraints on each arm and leg, a band around his waist, with a 2 inch wide medical collar pressed into his neck. Charred wounds peeked through tears in his clothes, crusted blood stained a matte burgundy where it leaked into the fabric. He tried to lift his eyelids at her voice but they half closed back, glassy eyes staring at the wall beside her, unable to focus.

“Rey what did I tell you?”

And then she was back on the base.

She jumped at the sound of his voice, “Damnit Poe! I could just slap you!”

“Woah woah, what?”

Rey put a hand out and leant on the canister, chest heaving. “You just... you scared me and I have a headache. I’ve been following you all day and it’s late and I’m tired.”

“I’m almost done, then we can go to bed. Promise.”

“Excuse me? ‘We’?”

“Yeah I got a cot set up in my room, you can take my bed. I was serious about this, Rey. Until we can find a way to stop it—” he pointed for extra emphasis “You. Me. Inseparable.”

“Well, I snore, so get ready for that.”

She didn’t snore but Poe certainly did, which in any other situation wouldn’t make her as happy as it did. Not only did it let her know he was asleep, it covered the sound of her sneaking out of bed. When the doors shut she froze, listening for anything to give away that Poe heard her. After a minute of more snoring, she tiptoed down the hall to dip into a storage room.

Kylo was in the same state he was in when she found him earlier but slightly more coherent. It would explain why it was easier to find him than last time, but not by much. It still took a lot of effort.

“Reyyy.” The last bit of her name was more of a sigh than speech.

“She did this to you, didn’t she?”

He nodded slightly. “Huxssss.”

“And that horrible man? It would make sense, they’re both awful. Let me get you down.”

“No.”

“What do you mean, ‘No’? You can’t want to stay like this, I won’t let you.”

His eyes looked down, trying to motion. “Collar.” As he spoke, she could hear the workings of
mechanics inside the metal band, and after a tinkle his head lolled to the side.

She leant on him to reach it. “It says… Stars, Ben, it injects you with… I think that’s a sedative… every hour. Hold on, let me just…” she fiddled with one of the chambers, a hiss of air coming out as she depressurized it. “There. It’ll still poke you, but nothing will be injected. Ben?”

He was gone again.

She put a hand on his chest, whispering to him despite the lack of response “I’ll find you again soon, I’ll get you out of here.”

Poe had just burst out into the hallway when she returned. “Are you okay? What are you doing out of bed?”

“I just went to get some water, Poe, it’s not the end of the world. I thought the doors would have woken you up when I left, I wasn’t gone long.”

“I saw you were gone and I was worried.” He hugged her and patted her on the back. “Seriously though, respect my orders and please don’t go anywhere again or I’ll cuff you to me.”

She saluted mockingly “Yes Dameron, Sir.”

“Don’t be like that or I’ll make you sleep on the cot. Come on.”
Advanced Falling

Chapter Summary

So this was supposed to be the last chapter, but it got out of hand. I promise there's only 2 more left after this!

Thank you for everyone that's stuck around, and I'm sorry if this isn't perfect

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Everything escalates, and everyone has a bad time.

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Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rey could barely sleep, stressed by the anticipation of hearing from him. She was afraid he might find her first, and at such a crucial moment freaking Poe all the way out was not something that could be afforded. There was too much going on that he just wouldn’t understand... and she couldn’t even begin to explain it to him. She knew he was doing the best he could to be responsible and fill the void left by General Organa, but damnit if he didn't pick the most inopportune time to be up her backside.

It was about 0500 when Kylo’s anger woke her, flaring like a hot coal that had caught a draft. She rushed down the hallway and back to the closet, not caring if she woke Poe or not. When she appeared Kylo’s eyes snapped open; the sharpness had returned to his gaze.

Rey put her hands on her hips matter of factly, “You have nowhere to go now, Ben Solo. Will you finally come with me?”

He wet his lips and swallowed before replying, as if he was thinking it over. “Yes.” His voice was hoarse and a little unsteady, but there was no mistaking the resentment in his tone.

“Go to the same clearing you met me at on Balamin. The um, the Resistance isn’t there, but I’ll be there.” It wasn’t a lie as much as it was a half-truth, which made it easier to tell. In his state it slipped past him.

“I’m still weak. Open the door and kill the guards outside. I’ll likely die, but I’ll try to find you.” His only chance of escape was getting to his ship as quickly as he could. In poor planning the cells were incredibly close to the hangar, one of the things that eased Rey’s escape the first time he found her.

“Stars Ben, I won’t kill them, but I’ll try to knock them out.” She opened the door and the guards jumped with surprise, fumbling for their blasters. She held her hands out and shouted “Sleep!” as if the words would help guide the force. They stood for a split second before crumpling to the ground. The clatter of armor on metal brought two guards from the security station down the hall. Rey dipped back into the cell, unnoticed.

Mechanical pops echoed in the tiny room as Kylo forced all the restraints open. His hand went instinctively to his saber, but of course it wasn’t there. He wanted to hunt it down there was no time...
and he was in no shape for a fight. Getting to the hangar in of itself was going to be difficult enough. Knowing Ichara he was sure she’d already had it mounted like a trophy.

His joints ached and fatigue clung to his bones- the sedation was a far cry from actual rest and he was exhausted. With a sigh he nodded to Rey, “I’ll see you on Balamin.”

“Ben… be careful.” She faded out, leaving him on his own. Kylo should have felt gratitude, gratefulness, anything in that moment other than indignation and resentment. It was common knowledge that the General hated him and coveted the position of Supreme Leader, but he never thought the man had the spine for it; it seemed his treacherous apprentice was just the backbone Hux needed. He felt like a failure for not seeing it sooner, and could hear the echoes of Snoke’s criticisms when he realized Rey saved his life.

The doors to the utility closet opened just as she came back to- Rey was busted.

“Unbelievable. Un-freaking believable, Rey.”

“Shut up, Poe, I did it! You want to set a trap for the Supreme Leader of the First Order? Because I just did!”

Poe put three fingers on each side of his temple, as if he were attempting to physically reboot his brain. “Oh my god Rey, what? Just… I don’t follow.”

“They turned on Kylo Ren- the apprentice and Hux. He’s got nowhere to go except to me.”

He grabbed her shoulders “Rey what the hell are you talking about?! Tell me you didn’t do anything stupid!”

“Look Poe, it’s happening. You can either help me or I’ll do it alone. I have a plan and we need the Falcon. If you want to be babysit me that means you have to come along.”

He closed his eyes, shaking his head with a sigh. “Lets go catch ourselves an evil jerk then I guess.”

The officers from the security station reached the cell and found a pile of troopers out cold on the floor.

“No… that’s impossible…” They looked at each other in despair as the one nearest the pad reluctantly opened the door. As they feared, Kylo was there waiting for them. He sent the pair flying past the station and into the wall between the two lifts, rendered unconscious on impact. The remaining officer ducked down and tucked herself as far as she could go under the station, closing her eyes and trying her best to be invisible.

Heavy footfalls echoed down the hallway and past the station. She heard the lift doors open and close, and after a moment of silence only then did she rise to the controls, typing up a quick message to Phasma even though she was likely asleep. She sent one to Hux as well but ran to the other lift to wake him in person. Given the secretive nature of the imprisonment she was unsure of what would be considered right or wrong protocol in this situation

“No... NO!” Mara jumped awake to see Phasma up and yelling profanity she’d never heard before as she rushed to get her armor on. She had security alerts set to their own special tone specifically for
instances like this. The piercing screech of the TIE fire alarm snatched her from the depths of sleep, and she barely even had to read the message to know what happened.

“Phas what is it?”

“Kylo is loose. You stay here and don’t move until I come back. It’s not safe.”

“I can go to-”

“Mara...Stay. Here.” The tone of her voice was firm, and slightly worried.

“Be safe, Phas, and please just kill that little shit this time.”

“I fully intend on it.”

- 

Hux woke to incessant beeping at his door. His heart was pounding before his feet hit the floor; somehow he already knew what the visit was about. He pulled on sleep pants and an undershirt to answer the door, doing the best he could to smooth his disheveled hair into some semblance of decency.

“Sir I don’t know how, but Kylo got out of his restraints and he got on a lift. I don’t know where he went, I came directly to you. He thinks he killed all the guards, he doesn’t know I was there. I-I didn’t know what to do.”

The words woke Ichara from her sleep as if she’d been dumped straight from the warm bed to the frigid tundras of Hoth. The icy terror dazed her, moving without thinking as she got dressed. Her mind screamed inside her head while limbs moved on their own accord; her subconscious knowing it was time to act.

She heard Hux cursing and getting dressed as quick as he could, snatching a clean uniform out of his closet.

In her poorly timed attempt at letting everything go the night prior, she’d left her weapons in her quarters “Fuck, my sabers aren’t here… you know what? It doesn’t matter.”

“Ichara wait, we need-“

“I’m done waiting, Hux!” she yelled, a bit more shrill than intended, and took off barefoot into the halls. She punched the lift button and closed her eyes, searching for him.

Where are you going?

Kylo could feel the brush of her reaching out for him like icy finger tips down his spine, and hurried even faster towards the hangar, doing his best not to wobble or look concerned. It seemed that Hux had done a half decent job of keeping his imprisonment a secret and other than a few strange looks no one said anything as he climbed into his Silencer. He knew the ship inside and out, and with a few quick keystrokes was able to deactivate the tracker installed while the engines started. Unsure of how much longer he could stay coherent, he punched in the settings for Balamin on the nav system. Ideally he’d give it more time to warm up but he could feel her fury ripple across the force as she entered the hangar. Every step she took thrummed through his mind like the tic of a countdown clock. He activated the thrusters, eyes focused on the edge of the runway.
Ichara sprinted into the hangar, fingers clawed like talons, heels dug in as she tried to pull the ship back. Hux entered the hangar a little behind her, hair still mussed from sleep, looking wild as he barked orders at troopers. She drew on every ounce of rage in her heart; the corner of his ship dipped, and for a second she thought it would work. Kylo was afraid it would too and punched it, tearing free from her grasp. Leaving the hangar at such high speeds was dangerous, but he didn’t have any choice.

She dropped to her knees in helpless disbelief as she watched the Silencer shoot out into the stars. The horrifying reality of the situation started to take hold and she fell forward, palms flat on the cold hangar floor. Every breath was deeper and quicker, almost hyperventilating as the panic set in. Fury, frustration, and fear fought within her for dominance, each emotion overwhelming in its individual intensity.

Containing it wasn’t possible.

She was consumed, and in her mind the hangar disappeared as she slipped into the darkness. It was like resting at the bottom of a cold, black ocean. All that existed in that moment was the desire for destruction, to make something, anything suffer as she did. An inhuman scream tore through her throat, as if the pain she felt was being physically ripped from the core of her being. Hux stopped midstride as he walked towards her; a visible darkness spreading out around her like a fog. Ghosts of herself seemed to vibrate around her hunched form as the air buzzed with electricity, the small hairs on the back of his neck standing on end at the sensation.

Lightning crackled out from her fists and snaked across the floor around her; the sounds of lights exploding and wires sparking intermingled with the howling that echoed through the hangar. Hux stepped backwards towards the door, horrified, and at a loss of what to do. The air was thick with darkness, magnifying every shadow and causing the remaining lights to dim.

Her head snapped to the side, glowing eyes burning into him.

*He should have let you kill him. This is his fault.*

*No. It was the plan. Stop.*

*Control yourself.*

*I can’t.*

“Hux… get away from me.” the voice that commanded him didn’t sound entirely human.

He almost tripped as he ran from the hangar, waiting just inside the doors in the hallway where stormtroopers had escaped to cower. Phasma came storming down the hallway, blaster drawn.

“What the actual fuck, Hux?” She didn’t think it was possible for him to look paler than he already was, but his face was white, brows knit in worry when he looked up at her.

“I don’t know what’s going to happen, but, if… if my life is in jeopardy… I want you to fire.”

The crackling sound of electricity and the groaning sounds of twisted metal intermingled with wailing on the other side of the doors. He wondered if she truly had gone mad. *This is my fault. I should have let her kill him.*

“Is she fighting Ren?”
“No, he escaped, she’s just… not taking it well.”

“You think she’ll attack you over this?”

Somehow hearing the words from someone else changed something. “What? No, no.” Hux did his best to brush his hair back with his hands in an attempt to regain composure. “No, this is ridiculous. I’m not afraid of her, she’d never harm me. In fact, you lot stay here, I’m going to stop this nonsense.”

“Sir, are you sure?”

“Absolutely.”

The hangar was almost pitch black, save the few remaining lights that still functioned and the fires from TIE fighters that had been pulled from their stations. She was panting, legs folded beneath her, bolts of the force randomly shooting along the floor. He strode towards her, doing his best to look bold both for himself and the guards watching. Phasma slipped into the hangar behind him, stepping off to the side to stand in the shadows, ready should he need protection.

Hux took a deep breath and knelt down in front of her, reaching through the hair fallen in her face to lift her chin. Her irises were ringed in glowing crimson, looking all the bit of a creature possessed as they seemed to stare through him. He tucked a lock of hair behind her ear with his other hand, revealing a spiderweb of purple creeping up from her neck and crossing her cheek. She looked like a shattered porcelain doll.

“Ichara… dear… That’s enough. We’ll get him back.”

She slowly raised a hand to his cheek; pinpricks of light flashed through her like she held a nebula just beneath her skin. He did his best not to flinch, staring into her determinedly. There was a prickle as her skin met his, and the flicker of arcs that jumped from her fingers flashed in the corner of his eye, but didn’t touch him.

*(Please don’t be let her be like him, she can’t go this way, please don’t go this way.)*

His unspoken words cut through the darkness, a silver hook in the black pulling her from the depths; the world around her slowly faded back into sight. She blinked rapidly, and the golden eyes he knew so well looked up at him sorrowfully.

“Hux… you know I’d never hurt you… I love you.” she whispered.

“I-I know, I know that.” He stuttered at the admission, unable to formulate a response with his nerves as frayed as they were.

He took her hand and gently pulled her to her feet. She fell into him and sighed deeply, letting everything fall away with the heavy exhale. He held her in a tight embrace, relieved that she hadn’t been lost to whatever it was just happened. He could feel more so than hear a hiss as the darkness receded, and the lights that still functioned returned to their former brightness. Fury gave way to grief, and her shoulders shook as she cried into his chest. He rubbed circles on her back and rested his cheek on the top of her head. He wasn’t entirely sure how to console someone, but remembered the motions were effective when his mother would go to calm him.
Hux paused to shout at the troopers that had formed a dumbfounded semi-circle, staring at him in amazement. “What the hell are you looking at? Pull up the tracker on that ship you incompetent cretins!” He returned to rubbing her back, whispering promises into her hair as he held her. “We’ll find him, and when we do we’ll blow him out of the sky. I promise you I’ll make this right. We’ll destroy him, beast, I promise.”

“Sir, he’s… uh… the tracker is disabled.”

*Of fucking course it is.* He could feel her go rigid in his arms and he was afraid she’d have another episode. Instead she sighed again, pulled back and ran her fingers through her hair to brush it back from her face. The pattern in her cheek hadn’t faded and the effect was unsettling.

“I’ve never been this angry before... I lost myself. I-I need to get dressed. I’m sorry for the mess, Hux. I just...” Her voice trailed off as she went to push past him, but he grabbed her arm before she could leave.

“Ichara-”

“Hux, I feel like I might be sick. I need to go.”

“I’ll be down below to see how he escaped. They will be punished for this.”

She just nodded and pulled her arm free, unable to speak for the lump in her throat. She all but ran to leave the hangar, and stormtroopers plastered themselves to the walls to give her clearance. All she could focus on was the lift door; everything had to stop for a minute, and she needed to be alone. Once she reached her level she ran down the halls, bursting into her quarters and stumbling into the refresher, vomiting bile into the sink. She fell into the wall and slid down it, dry heaving so hard she thought she’d pull a muscle.

*You knew it. You knew this would happen. He’s going to take everything from you all over again... no. no no no.*

Dry heaving evolved into choking sobs; leaving her a pathetic, scrunched up mess against the wall. There was no time for tears though. One by one she plucked a petal from the anxiety that had blossomed in her chest, growing more focused and more determined as each one fell away. With one final, shuddering gasp she pulled herself to her feet and splashed cold water over her face, looking up at the fractured thing staring back.

“You didn’t come this far to fail now. Do your damn job.” She slipped out of her clothes, shedding the costume of a ‘normal person’ she’d worn for the night and stepped into the shower, turning the cold setting all the way up. The water was near freezing, almost a slurry as it pelted her skin. She didn’t step out until her face was as numb as she was.

Kylo faded in and out as he flew, the ping of his controls waking him to let him know he was nearing the planet. When he entered the atmosphere the suns’ light almost blinded him as it peeked over the horizon. He landed clumsily in the large clearing, and sure enough the Falcon was waiting like she said it would be. He limped out to meet Rey, who was running over to him.

“I disabled the tracker, they couldn’t follow my ship here.” He put a hand to his head, the sudden motion making him dizzy.
Small but strong fingers grabbed his upper arm, “Come on, let’s get you out of here. We need to go.”

He balked when they reached the ramp, and he didn’t know if it was the fear of old memories or the force telling him something was amiss. “You came alone, right?”

“I- I did yes, we need to go, I saved your life I think that should earn a least a little bit of trust.” She planted a hand in his lower back to physically push him up but he whipped around and grabbed her wrist, glaring at her.

“You’re lying. You’re a horrible liar.” he winced, the anger making his headache even worse.

“I, um, that’s an incredibly rude thing to say…”

Her eyes darted over Kylo’s shoulder, and he turned around to see Poe behind him.

“Hey bud, what’s up?” In one swift motion his fist connected with Kylo’s jaw and he fell lifeless onto Rey, knocked out on contact. Poe shook his hand “Gah, that hurt but it was so worth it.”

“Poe, he’s heavy!” Rey grunted. He grabbed Kylo’s other shoulder and they both dragged him onto the Falcon, making the small hop back to the base.

Every available fighter lined the main landing platform, weapons drawn. Chewbacca came down the ramp with Kylo over his shoulder. He was the only creature on the base bigger than him and Poe said he wasn’t lugging the ‘monster man’ again. The hall to the brig was clogged with fighters there to gawk as much as offer back up should the dark side creature come to life and rain down destruction.

“Rose, could you please bring me some water and some aspirin? I’ll need a medkit too. I’m going to sit with him till he comes around, I have a feeling his face is going to be pretty sore when he wakes up.”

Rose’s expression was a mixture of horror and disgust, “Are you sure that’s safe?”

“He won’t hurt me, I know it. Besides, I’ve got my saber now and I’ve beat him twice before.” she laughed “I think I’ll be fine.” The death of General Organa spurred Rey on to repair the broken saber she’d retrieved after the throne room fight. She was determined to never be caught off guard like that again. The hallway squabble with Ichara replayed over and over again in her head, thinking if she’d just had a lightsaber maybe things could have ended differently.

Kylo was unconscious, but the sting of her cleaning the wound on his shoulder brought him to. He sat up slowly, the shooting pain in his temple making it hard for his eyes to focus. Rey hopped up to retrieve a thermos of water, shoving it into his hand. “Here, take these.”

“What, so you can drug me too? No thanks.”

“Ben, stop. They’re aspirin. They’ll help with your headache.”

He took them from her, dropped them to the floor and ground them under his heel. “Why should I believe a word you say? Liar.”

“I’m sorry about the Falcon, it was the only way to get you to where we are safely. We can’t risk the
First Order finding us.”

“And my ship?”

Rey pictured Finn & Friends running through the woods with a bunch of flammable materials, and then dancing around a fire that was suspiciously TIE-Silencer shaped. Poe may or may not have carried BB-8 through the brush to use its lighter to do the honors.

“We… had to ditch it.”

“You destroyed it.”

“Well, I didn’t but-”

“Say what you want about me, Rey, but I’ve never lied to you.” He couldn’t make her out clearly, but did his best to narrow his eyes at the figure he assumed was her.

“I’ve only lied about things for your protection, Ben. Your mother-”

“Don’t you dare speak to me of MY mother, scavenger!” he spat. “You know nothing about her!” He was furious that she tricked him, and then had the audacity to quote his own mother to him as if she were a damn saint. He wished he’d just stayed put in the restraints and tried his luck back on the ship instead.

She recoiled from the sudden venom in his tone, “Well I spent a lot more time with her than you recently.”

“You parents abandoned you. Don’t pretend that you know how my own mother felt because you knew her for a fraction of a second, it’s pathetic, and... Ah!” He grimaced and put both hands on the side of his head, stars pricked at the edge of his vision from the pain. “Just go, go away. You’re only making everything worse.” He laid back down on the cot to face the wall.

One of the guards chimed in “This guy is trash, come on.” but even with Kylo’s back turned, the soldier in question gasped for air, levitating in the air as if he was held by his throat.

“Stop! Ben, Leave him alone!” At Rey’s insistence, the man was released. “Why are you being so horrible? I saved you!”

“I didn’t ask you to.”

She crossed her arms and huffed. “So what, I should have just left you to get killed by those… those animals?”

He didn’t move to look at her, eyes shut tight as he tried to get a handle on the pain. “Did you ever stop to wonder if I deserved it?” His voice was a low, barely audible as he rumbled at the wall.

She stared at him with hurt in her eyes, “Ben… don’t say things like that.”

“Rey… Go. Away.”

“Fine, but I’ll be back. You can’t sulk forever.” She wasn’t entirely sure that was true, though.
Hux found Ichara at the far edge of the hangar she’d destroyed earlier. The power of the forcefield generated a light breeze, and her robes billowed behind her as she gazed out into space. Her hood was up, hiding her maimed face from view.

“The footage is strangely blurred” he called out as he approached her, “But the troopers swear that a girl was with him. From their description it sounds like the Jakku girl, though I don’t know how that would be possible. It doesn’t make sense. The collar had been deactivated, allowing him to regain consciousness”

She said nothing, and he was growing uncomfortable with her silence until a hoarse voice finally muttered, “I’m going to split that desert bitch in two.”

Hux frowned, every day seeming to have some terrible revelation of force abilities he didn’t know existed. When this was over, he made a note to sit down with Ichara to find out the extent of said mysticism’s reach. “So it was her then? Phasma thought they’d invented an elaborate lie.”

“I’m going to find him, I think I know where he went.” She fell to her knees, muttering as she focused on Kylo. She opened her eyes to see a form clad in black, curled up on a cot that was much too short for him. A very familiar cot in a very familiar cell.

“Hiding like a coward I see.”

Hux knit his brows in confusion; her voice sounded strange- it echoed, both here and not.

Kylo almost fell out of the cot as he rolled over to see the source of the familiar voice. He couldn’t see her face under the hood of her robe as she stood, darkening the cell over him.

“You’re delaying the inevitable. I will find you, and finish what you started.”

He lept to his feet, towering over her as he lunged forward, gritting his teeth to fight the dull ache in his head. “Do it. I’m not afraid of you.”

She laughed “Then why did you run away?”

Ichara disappeared before he could say anything else. “I found him. They’ve returned to the base on Balamin. We need to go now.”

Hux wasn’t entirely sure what he just witnessed, but leapt at the chance to do anything that could fix this situation.

“Balamin is a decent clip from the hyperlanes, the command shuttle will give us a more direct route.”

“What do you must, I need to prepare.” She marched off without another word, going to retrieve his saber from her quarters.

It wasn’t just that she wanted to best him again in combat- if he felt the saber’s presence there was no way he’d abandon it.

“This should pry him from that scavenger’s grasp.” She depressed the activator and stared into the crackling blade, squeezing the hilt as if she could strangle him from across the galaxy.
Most of the trip was made in silence and it was eating away at Hux. A switch flipped in the hangar, and she was cold, aloof. She remained standing at the front of the ship staring out at the stars, much to the distress of the pilots. He wanted to make things right, and though she hadn't directly blamed him for the predicament they found themselves in, he felt like he knew that's what she was thinking. The nervous tension wasn't something he'd felt since Snoke was alive.

He cleared his throat, determined not to sound childish when he spoke. “I feel like you’re angry with me.”

There was a beat of quiet before she responded. “I’m not angry at you, Hux, I’m angry at the situation. You couldn’t have foreseen her. I should have though. This is my fault.” Initially she was absolutely livid with him, but Rey’s intervention wasn’t something his men could have been prepared for. In the rush of the moment the force bond had completely slipped from her mind.

“Ichara,” he paused, reaching to pull her hood back. Her hand snapped up to grab his wrist.

“Don’t.”

He snatched his wrist free. “Don’t be ridiculous.” He took both hands lifted the heavy fabric back.

She stared at the ground as the light caught the purple scars across her face. “I- I tried to heal it. It won’t go away.”

“Look at me.” he lifted her chin. “Your powers should already terrify our enemies. This mark on your face is just proof that you’re to be feared.”

A smile pricked the corners of her mouth. “You’re a ridiculous man, Armitage Hux.”

He furrowed his brow “It was a compliment, I-”

“Shh, I know.” She put an arm around his waist and leant into him.

“So you knew him before the First Order, before Snoke. What was he like? I was always curious if some people are just born that insufferable.”

“He was... kind. Quiet, but when he did speak he had a sense of humor that could get him into trouble. Even then he carried a sadness in his bones, though. I think he always knew what was coming. There was darkness in both of us; everyone felt it. It was like Luke was trying to beat it out of us, always training us harder than all the others but it still never being enough. It instilled a hunger for validation in Ben, and he hung on every scrap of praise that was given. That conditioning affects everyone differently though. It made him fight harder to please... it made me turn inwards, made me spiteful. I would only be good enough for myself, and I was fine with that. While I healed from his attack, what made the angriest was that he didn’t take me... after all that... the understanding I thought that we had. I wonder now if he was afraid of me even then. He needed that praise from Snoke, and didn’t want someone that might take that away. It broke my heart, to be honest.”

Hux stood in silence, frowning, unsure of what to say.

“I need to meditate before we land. I have to be ready.” She sighed and slipped away, his eyes following her as she went to sit in front of the ramp. So much had changed since she knelt before him on Canto Bight. In his strictly structured world she was a streak of wilderness, of unchecked passion he never expected to experience. He wouldn’t change a thing.
Well, other than letting her kill Ren- he would have let her hack him to bits to avoid all this.

Chapter End Notes

"This isn't regular darkness, this is *advanced darkness* (Spongebob reference, I'm a dork lol)

Sorry this was longer than my usual chapters- I should have the next one posted Friday and the last one next Wednesday. I love this fic so much and it makes my heart soar to see that others have enjoyed my ridiculousness as well.

Thank you again for reading! Find me on tumblr for more shenanigans, I have a Kylo/OFc WIP I'm hoping to drop in a couple weeks <3 <3 <3
This hasn’t been beta’d yet, will be beta’d Thursday, but I wanted to go ahead and post it. It's longer than my usual chapters.

Sorry if it's not perfect, I've been in a funk the past few days, thanks you for staying with me <3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was nightfall when they arrived. Rain was pouring down in sheets and thunder shook the ship as it descended through the clouds. Ichara was still as a statue at the doors, the only thing moving were her fingers as she opened and closed them into fists.

Where are you?

Kylo was pulled out of his troubled sleep by the whisper through his mind- he could feel her, and she was near. In one smooth motion he rose to his feet and blew up the control panel with a flourish, bringing down the forcefield. The time for playing prisoner was over. The two guards posted outside crumpled to the ground, their necks snapped before they could react to what was happening. The pounding in his head had subsided, replaced with the heavy rhythm of his heartbeat as he stalked the halls. He came across more Resistance fighters as he rounded a corner and they fumbled to retrieve their blasters, in shock at the dark force user bearing down on them.

“The First Order is coming, I can feel my apprentice. If you want to live you need to go now.” He said it not so much out of concern, but that the fleeing Resistance would provide a half decent cover for him.

They pointed their weapons at him, glancing to their compatriots nervously, unsure of what to do. “How can we believe anything you say?”

“Don’t then. It doesn’t matter to me.” They went flying into the walls as he ran past them. Unsure of where to go, he followed the pull of her presence, skidding out into the rain on one of the higher landing pads generally used for maintenance. He looked down at the command shuttle landing beside the Falcon on the main pad below, its slick black angles stabbing into the night sky.

Rey hadn’t been able to sleep and was wandering the woods, fighting the urge to go down and talk to him. When the rain started falling she didn’t even care, feeling it was the perfect accent to her grumpy mood. Rain was nonexistent on Jakku and she enjoyed sound of the pitter patter on the leaves, the feeling of cool drops sprinkling on her skin. It managed to cheer her up a bit; she was hurt by his demeanor, and part of her wondered if bringing him here was really the right decision. As the alarms started to blare she was truly starting to believe it wasn’t.

She pushed through the underbrush as she raced back to the base. Her heart sunk at the sight of the First Order ship- perhaps it was all an elaborate ruse after all. Luckily the larger bay doors were
down, leaving only a narrow passageway for stormtroopers trying to enter the base. Though few resistance soldiers had stayed behind, the narrow opening would at least make it difficult to overtake them. She could feel Kylo’s presence and ran up the stairs to the maintenance pad, stopping just short of the light to stay hidden— he was standing at the bay doors for the upper landing strip.

“Ben!” she called out, barely loud enough for him to hear.

He didn’t look over, walking to the railing to watch Ichara stroll into sight. “It’s her. This is my fight, stay out of it.”

It was just a skeleton crew left to meet them, the remaining rebels scrambling out of their cots to get ready for battle. At the noise the night shift fighters rushed out, all aiming their weapons at the ramp of the shuttle in anticipation. It opened with a hiss, and as soon as Ichara’s boots were visible coming down the ramp they opened fire. She flicked them away at first, but once she reached the end of the ramp she held both hands out, the bolts freezing in mid air in a glittering semi circle. Stormtroopers marched down behind her, some kneeling at her side and other standing behind them in formation, blasters drawn. Hux and Phasma strode out behind her, calling out orders. She shoved her hands forward and the bolts returned at once in a sparkling rush, soldiers falling out from their own fire.

She ignited his saber and held it high, her voice vaulting through the rain as she screamed for her nemesis. “Where are you hiding, Kylo Ren?!”

He reached out and summoned it, her eyes following it to the level above her to the right. She shrugged her robe off and sprinted towards him, reaching out with the force to pull herself to the upper landing. She somersaulted across the ground, ending up on one knee with the other leg outstretched, crouched as she pulled out her sabers, blocking him from the bay doors.

“We have a debt to settle, you and I.”

Rey ran to his side and put a hand on his shoulder “Ben, we don’t have time for this we have to go!”

He shrugged her hand away, squaring his shoulders as he braced to meet the oncoming storm. “No. She’ll never stop. This ends now.”

“Ben, I-”

He turned to her, jaw set in determination, a combination of rage and fear in his eyes. “This is a part of my past that must die. Go. Now.”

“I’m not leaving you, I-”

“This isn’t your fight!”

“You are my fight! I’m not letting you go!”

Ichara smirked “I’ll kill her too, Ben, I don’t mind.”

He grunted in frustration, and with a wave of his arm flung her backwards off the platform, a 20 foot drop into the bushes below. She reached out and slowed her fall with the force. Angry but undeterred, she clambered out and ran to the stairs on the far right of the pad again, stopping to stay just out of sight. She wasn’t leaving him, not after all they had been through to get to this point. She
remembered the primal fervor that overtook him when they fought the Praetorian guards- a lust that would have lead to his death were she not there to help him at the last minute. As strong as he was they were stronger together, and she wasn’t going to abandon him in a battle as crucial as this.

In her mind Ichara was his last tie to the First Order, the last tie to darkness. Maybe once he beat her, once they beat her, he’d be free and she could save the good in him. Rey waited in the shadows as they fought, clutching her saber in front of her, thumb trembling over the activation button.

Ichara slowed as she neared him, two sabers sizzling in the rain as she swirled them in tight circles by her side.

“This has been a long time coming. I am owed my peace.”

He ignited his saber and stepped wide into his combat stance.

“I’ve been told there is peace in death. I’ll gladly give it to you. You’re the last relic from my past I have to kill, and when I do I’ll be free. I didn’t even remember who you were- you’re nothing.” he spat, “Especially to me.”

She screeched like a feral animal as she lunged towards him, both spinning and weaving on the slick concrete as lightning split the sky above them.

Hux saw the crimson flashes and waved Phasma over. “We need to get up there, ensure this ends the way we see fit.”

“Agreed. This way.” The Resistance fighters offered very little, well, resistance, as they entered the base. It was old and the main lift didn’t work so they were forced to find a stairwell.

While Kylo was in a drugged delirium he began to understand why Ichara was the way she was- he was her Luke Skywalker. He turned on her, left her to die, and she spent her entire life orchestrating her revenge. It was his acknowledgement and understanding of her suffering that made it hard to strike her down. She endured the same suffering he had, but at his hand… he wondered if he was no better than the man he despised.

In a cruel tandem, she had felt the brokeness in him; a man maimed and shaped to be what he was. The arch nemesis she had trained for all her life was a broken, abused soul. She didn’t pity him, no, but she understood- and in a way that was worse.

Rain soaked hair clung to his cheeks, and for a moment they just stared at each other across the locked blades. He remembered how he clung to her at night when the emptiness felt all consuming; like he was collapsing into himself- but he had her, a sacrilegious anchor. Soft, scarred skin against his own marred form, her hand brushing his face as he ran his fingers through her hair. That had to be something. Kylo considered falling to his knees to stop it all. He just wanted to go back to the ship, have everything back the way it was. That was impossible though- there was no forgiveness in the woman snarling back at him.

They were both angry, both afraid, both knowing one wasn’t going to walk away from this fight.

“I’ve already beaten you once, I’ll do it again!”

“You were weak then, and you’re weak now!” He shoved her back with a growl and she almost slipped on the slick pavement.
She ran in to swing again, teeth bared. Their crimson sabers danced in the rain, ruby reflections casting a supernatural glow off the slick concrete, the pavilion they battled on akin to a pit of hell between the red and the rage. She caught his chaotic blade with her two short sabers, grimacing to keep them away from her neck.

Again, she used the cross of her blades as the defensive, as he *should* know, he told himself, as yet again she shifted him off.

There was an air of apprehension between the two as they circled each other before she charged him again. With his injuries he was tiring before her. She held another over head blow with her two sabers parallel, and as she went to break one free to slice his torso a blue blade illuminated the darkness, catching it as Ichara pulled back. She struggled to deflect the blade and it skinned from knuckle to elbow as it went down.

She screamed and released the hold as she threw herself backwards, using the force to get about twenty feet away from the fight, skidding backward to end up in a kneeling position; back to the railing, left arm smoking with singed flesh.

“Scavenger.” she snarled

“I told you this wasn’t your fight!” he yelled, furious with the interference.

“And I told you it was!”

“Of course you can’t do it alone- you’ve never done anything alone in your damn life, have you?” She stalked towards them, sabers swinging before attacking each separately. Caught between blind faith and blind hate, she wasn’t sure what was worse.

She held her own, but they both had a penchant for the over head swings, a tiring force to block. Ichara’s strength was finally enough to push back, and she shoved against Kylo with both her saber and the force, sending him flying backwards, crashing into the railing, almost flipping over it to the bushes below.

Ichara turned to smile at Rey. “I told Hux I’d split you in two- I meant it.”

“I’m not afraid of you! This ends here!” Rey swung and she deflected it with her left saber, sweeping her right up to slice Rey from hip to shoulder. In the shock it didn’t register, and Ichara brought the right blade back down with a growl, slicing her arm just past the shoulder. She didn’t have time to gloat as Kylo had returned to his feet and was running up behind her.

Rey stumbled back into the shadows, weakly summoning her saber back to her good hand as she fell into the wall. Things weren’t supposed to go this way. The light always seemed victorious, and in the back of her mind she’d never considered that she just might *not* win this fight.

As he rose to his feet after she threw him back, he searched his memories for the times they sparred when they were younger. She’d often used her lack of a training partner as a cover for her lopsided fighting, but there was truth to what she said. Without someone to practice against it was likely she still had a lot of bad habits... specifically over extending her swings.

She looked over her shoulder to see Kylo approaching mid-swing, and swung back with her left arm to catch his blade. He disengaged his saber just before contact and she spun around too fast from the
unchecked force, expecting a hit where there wasn’t one. He tossed it to his other hand, igniting it as he thrust it through the right side of her chest.

He buried his saber to the hilt, crossguards melting her armor plating as he pushed into her. Her eyes went wide and her arms dropped to her side, sabers sputtering as the tips brushed the wet concrete.

He could hear her voice in his head as she struggled to draw a breath. *That... that's not fair.*

She looked up at him to see confliction rather than victory. He deactivated his saber and stared at her in amazement- part of him had resigned himself to defeat and expected to die on this platform rather than stand victorious.

“Ah, the killer you are” her voice was an eerie, raspy whisper, blood in her breath from the compromised lung. With a last bit of effort she spun her saber around, slicing through the forearm that still held the hilt to her chest. He roared and stumbled backwards, summoning his saber to his available hand to strike her down.

She fell to her knees, her voice gurgled with blood as she managed one last word “Run.” She smiled with bloodstained teeth and collapsed onto her back, splayed out in the rain.

He raised his saber overhead, but a scream at the bay doors distracted him. He saw Hux sprinting towards him, blaster outstretched, bolts whizzing by him. He looked at Rey, leant up against the wall just in the shadows before leaping over the railing, using the force to soften his fall. With the majority of the troopers inside the base there was little resistance as he ran towards the Falcon. He was able to slip past on the edge of the platform in the shadow of the ships. He used the force to guide him, unsure of how he was going to get out alive.

Luckily the ramp was already down, and two troopers went flying down it as Chewbacca kicked them out.

Kylo ran to the foot of the ramp and held out his saber, but didn’t ignite it.

“Don’t make me do this. Please... just go.” As far as he had fallen, he couldn’t bring himself to hurt Chewie.

But the Wookie stood fast, unmoving. Kylo holstered his saber and reached out, dragging him down the ramp before racing up it and closing it behind him. He rushed to the all too familiar cockpit, flipping switches and punching buttons, struggling to get anywhere but Balamin. It was hard enough to fly this thing solo, but with one hand it was even more difficult. After much effort and a few wrong switches, the vessel finally lifted from the landing pad. The Finalizer had just come into orbit as he left the atmosphere; it was stuck to following the hyperspace lanes before jumping off to manually navigate to the planet. A few TIE fighters came out to greet him, but he hit hyperspeed before the fire could do much damage. He set out for the Alderaanian Graveyard, hoping to hide amongst the asteroids while he did his best to heal himself and recoup.

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Hux had been busy directing his men to what he thought would be obvious as he tried to navigate the winding halls of the base. They hadn’t expected prisoners, and somehow they lacked the intellectual capacity to take them to the ship. He was bombarded left and right with questions that he thought would be answered with common sense. As he entered the upper most level, a glance through the bay doors hit him in the gut.
He was too late. Twin sabers seared the ground as a body hung on Kylo’s crackling blade. Hux drew his blaster rushed down to the pavillion as fast as he could, screaming for Phasma and his guard as he ran.

He went bounding out into the rain, struggling to aim at his target. Between the red flashing lights and the darkness of the forest behind them, Kylo was almost impossible to make out. He shot blindly, hoping to at least graze him.

Ichara used the force as best she could to hold herself together and stem the bleeding, but despite it all she could feel her life ebbing away. It didn’t even hurt. All she could feel was the patter of cold raindrops on her face, ice cold rivulets running into her mouth, drops blurring the vision of her unblinking eyes. He finished what he started… in the end, she mused, delirium creeping from the blood loss. Oh, Hux… at the thought of him, a tear ran down her side of her face, the salty water mingling with the blood and the rain. I am so sorry to leave you. You made me so proud… I loved you so much… A splash of orange entered her sight from the direction of the fort, clashing against the thundering night sky. Burn it all down, love. Bury me in the ashes.

Rey scooted as far against the wall as she could, doing her best to stay motionless and hidden in the shadow. She’d never been this close to the General, and as much as she wanted to strike him down, she was afraid to try in her condition. She watched with morbid fascination as the most hateful man in the galaxy mourned. I wonder if that’s who she was coming back to. It was fascinating to her, to see the humanity in their enemy. It was so easy to forget they had feelings too, and it made her sad to think how much suffering was on both sides in this war.

Hux fell to the ground beside her, rain running crimson with blood from the hole in her chest.

“No no no… stars no, Ichara? Ichara! You will not die, do you hear me? You will NOT.” He saw two troopers pulling cuffed resistance fighters and called out “Bring them to me!! Now!!”

The troopers ran over and Hux snatched the first prisoner and shoved him to the ground.

He looked like a man possessed- hair was dripping and disheveled, fallen across wild blue eyes.

“Here, here darling.” he put her hand in hand with the prisoner.

Nothing.

The troopers looked at each other in confusion. The lieutenant that was with him was equally confused, as was the resistance fighter, who just shrugged at them. “Sir, I think she’s-”

“No, she is NOT DEAD!” he screamed.

His mind raced, trying to remember how she drained the life from people. “No no no, it’s the neck, that’s right, the neck.” he mumbled.

He grabbed her hand and moved it to his jugular, pressing into it, babbling threats as if he could sway the death itself. “Ichara, dammit, you useless slag, I’ll burn you to dust if you die, I will leave you here to let the rodents gnaw your bones and the birds pick you clean, I’ll, I’ll-”

The fighter went rigid, then fell limp- Just like in the medical bay after Canto Bight. Hux could feel the muscles in her hand tighten underneath his own. “Give me the other one!” he barked. “Lieutenant, bring me every prisoner you can find. If she dies, I am holding you personally
accountable!"

“Y-yes sir”

She was drifting away, lulled into the depths of death by the pitter-patter of rain, creating a soothing melody against the metallic railing as she floated inside of herself... until a different, steady beat drummed at the edge of her awareness. She could feel warmth thrumming, but couldn’t tell what it was or where it was coming from. It sounded like…

A heartbeat.

Instinct kicked in, and the darkness lunged towards the warmth, snaking from her like a primitive serpent, sinking its teeth into the essence of life itself and dragging it into her. Just as quickly as she felt it, it was gone. She blinked, and could focus enough to realize the orange wasn’t the flames she suspected- it was Hux’s hair reflecting gold in the low light.

*He didn’t leave me*

Still too broken and depleted to move she again felt warm skin beneath her palm. She drew the life into her, healing what she could. The force was only as strong as she was, and this particular spell was taxing. Still weak, her eyes faded back out of focus. She directed her face towards what she thought was Hux.

“*Hux… I’m dying… I… I can’t… anymore...*”

She could hear him shouting, and felt herself lifted up out of the pool of her own blood, carried between two troopers. It was hard enough to even be, let alone worry about the pain once she got on board the shuttle. A medical team was waiting for them in the hangar when they returned to the Finalizer. Needles were jammed into various veins, med droids scampered across as they scanned her, telling everyone in earshot she was going to die.

The corner of her mouth pricked in the best smirk she could muster when she heard Hux threatening droids and staff alike. She caught his eye before everything went black, falling into a force-induced hibernation that was her only chance at life. It would be two days until she came back to herself; time spent on the Finalizer, but simultaneously light years away.

*-

Once they left Rey limped away into the darkness, collapsing on her side at the bottom of the stairs. She didn’t know how long she stayed like that, hoping she wouldn’t be noticed by the troopers swarming the base.

“*There you are, thank the stars!*”

She weakly rose to her feet. “I’ve, I’ve been…”

Chewbacca had come around the corner with Rose, slinking out under the cover of darkness. He picked her up, carrying her to a few transports that had been tucked out behind the base. They were being used for storage so there wasn’t much room for people, but it would have to do. About a third of the of soldiers had managed to escape, stuffing themselves the best they could into the pods.

Chewie laid Rey out across storage crates, a makeshift tourniquet on her arm while Rose did her best to clean the strike across her torso.
“Luckily it wasn’t deep, it’s just skin, but it’s big. We need to get her back to the Moirana out in the graveyard, a star cruiser’s medbay should be able to fix her right up. We’ll have to risk it, but I doubt they’ll be looking for transports. If we can stay low in the atmosphere and get to the other side of the planet we should be able to leave undetected.”

*Don’t think his brokenness won’t cut you to the bone, because it will. And he’ll let you bleed out.*

“She was right, Rose. She knew him better than me.”

“Rey, what are you talking about?”

“I- I can’t save him.”

“Rey…” Rose took her hand and held it tight, clutching it to her chest. “Out of everything wrong and awful and bad in this galaxy, you having too big a heart is not one of them.”

A tear slid down her check as she looked up at her friend. “This is all my fault… this happened because… I… he…”

“Look, don’t think about him. You tried and it’s over and we’re moving on. I’ll whip you up an even fancier arm, you’ll see. Heck, you might not even want your other one!” She laughed but then looked horrified with herself, not entirely sure if that was an appropriate joke to make at the moment. “Oh stars, Rey, I um, I didn’t mean…”

Rey smiled weakly. “Maybe you’re right Rose, I might even want an extra one for back-up.”

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Ichara floated in the bacta tank, her form barely visible through the bubbles. An attachment to her neck oxygenated her blood, her throat blocked off to allow bacta to flow freely into her compromised lungs. The doctor said it was a miracle she survived… but Hux didn’t believe in miracles. The force wasn’t ready to let her go yet and neither was he. The General didn’t know if his will could affect anything, but every fiber in his being demanded her to live on the return trip, threatening the universe with various acts of unspeakable evil in his head should it take her from him.

“She’s too hateful to die.” he muttered half jokingly.

“We have her stabilized for now, I’ll contact you should anything change. You should probably get some rest, General.” The doctor shuffled nervously, knowing that her death would be considered a failure on his part, and that the punishment-regardless of fault- would be unpleasant.

“You’re the medical professional, I suppose I should take your advice.” Hux meandered down the halls, every footstep seeming to echo in his chest like an empty shell.

He blamed himself, he blamed her, and he blamed Kylo Ren.

*Ren.*

Hux searched out the closet she’d destroyed before, running his fingers down the gouges in the walls. It was like he was touching a piece of her. “Perhaps there is something to be said for wanton
destruction.”

He took a screw off one of the shelves and dropped it to the floor, watching intently as it rolled away.

“This is D’qar all over again.”

He plucked another one off and let it fall, too.

“I just had to put on a show, didn’t I.”

Another screw hit the ground, and he kicked it away as it rolled towards him.

“We’re here tonight because of my ego.”

Every tink of a metal hitting the floor brought him one step closer to the edge. He could feel the despair and fury churning in the distance. It was quickly approaching, like a ship falling to earth above him and all he could do was watch.

Another hit the floor.

Another hit the floor.

The whole box hit the floor.

He took his arm and swiped the shelf clean, various boxes and containers crashing as they smashed onto the ground. With a roar he grabbed the shelf and put his foot against the wall, ripping it to the ground. He stumbled till his back hit something solid, putting his face in his hands as he slid down it. One strangled cry of grief was all he allowed himself; gloves slick with tears as he sobbed silently into his hands.

Ichara could be good as dead, the tumultuous state of leadership was ripe for a coup, and he had to come up with a statement as soon as possible. There was no time for grief- he wanted the mantle of Supreme Leader and now it was his, but he had to take it. The tears slowed and his breathing steadied as he made a mental list of everything that needed tending to.

Hux coughed and pushed himself to his feet, dusting himself off and straightening his uniform, still soaked with rain and blood from Balamin. He dried his face and slicked his hair back before marching straight to his quarters, doing the best he could to bolster his spirit.

Rest and things will be better. Now is not the time to lose your head. Ren is gone. Focus on the positives. Ren is gone, and you’re the Supreme Leader now. It’s all on you.

He peeled off his uniform and collapsed directly into bed. The sheets still smelled of her, and he pulled a pillow close, thinking this might be nothing more than a nightmare, and if he could just wake up she’d still be here.

Hux barely slept, his body jerking awake every time sleep started to take him. His alarm went off and he rubbed his eyes, puffy from the lack of rest. He moved like an automaton, measuring out tea leaves into the filter of his kettle and gently clipping the lid shut. A loud beep indicated it was ready, and he stopped his stretches to pour a steaming cup, stirring in two cubes of sugar. On a whim dumped more than a few fingers of whiskey into it. It was a disgusting combination, but he wolfed it
down anyways. A pleasant tingling reached his fingertips and made the morning a little bit more bearable. He showered and tugged on a crisp new uniform, the same way he had for years.

One could almost be deceived into thinking nothing had changed.

He sat down on his couch and pulled on a pair of freshly polished boots, taking a moment to put his elbows on his knees and hide his face in his hands, careful not to muss the still-drying gel in his hair. As he rose, he eyed the bottle of whiskey guiltily, downing one more pull before leaving for the bridge. He couldn’t think, mind still frazzled from a lack of rest and stress from the events of the night. He needed something to settle his nerves and dull the sting.

The Finalizer and Horizon were still in orbit of Balamin. It was a fairly wild planet, and didn’t have much of a local government nor real towns, aside the one hub of trade- Kintrac. They had decent exports of exotic flora and fauna, and it was just far enough away from most of the busier lanes of trade to make a half decent stopping point for smugglers. They likely had no idea, nor any interest, that the Resistance was camping out on the other side of their planet- but he didn’t care.

Someone was going to suffer.

“General Hux, a ‘Governor Mirin’ has contacted us, they want us to leave orbit immediately, says it’s bad for business unless we’re buying something.” The General smirked as he took the data pad from Mitaka.

“Is that so? I hate to inform him that utter annihilation will be worse. Contact them.”

The projector screen flickered, showing an angry Toydarian fluttering before him.

“What is this, ah? Two Star Destroyers, very nice, but you need to go somewhere else. We don’t want a part in your war.”

“It seems to me by providing refuge for the Resistance in the abandoned base in Shaldar that you are very much a part of this war. The losing side, might I add.”

“Ehh that’s the other side of the planet, whatever happens there I cannot control.”

“All those who support the Resistance are liars, crooks, and thieves, ‘Governor’. Actions speak louder than words, and your actions say you are lying. Like all other who cross us, you will pay the price.” he pressed a button on the data pad and turned off the hologram before he could reply.

The projector flickered again to bring up Captain Baumera of the Horizon. “Captain, prime your ventral cannons and plasma torpedoes. Fire on the city until it is obliterated.”

“Yes Sir, but, ah, has the Supreme Leader-”

“The Supreme Leader… is dead. I have always been and will continue to be your commanding officer and you will see to it the city is destroyed or you will be destroyed. Understood?”

She nodded her head curtly, “Yes, General.”

He turned his attention to the weapons stations. “Same goes for you lot. Charge the ventral cannons and fire when hot. The galaxy needs to see that there are repercussions to defying the First Order so boldly.”
Hux marched to the viewport, watching as the blazing orange lasers hit their target. Silver and black wisps rose into the atmosphere, a widening gash across the greenery of the continent, signaling the devastation of the destruction.

Mitaka came up behind him and gently touched his shoulder, “Excuse me, um, sir? Should we continue? The scans-”

“No. That’s enough. Do the same to the base in Shaldar, then take us to the Ilenium system. Let us make sure that these rodents haven’t scurried back to D’Qar.” He had been staring off into the smoke, mesmerized- not even lost in thought, just simply observing, wishing the destruction could at least give him some physical release for the tension in his chest.

“Excellent work. Now onto the base. I’ll be in my office if my presence is required.” he called out across the bridge as he left. He was fighting the urge to go down to the medical bay as there had been no updates on her status. He would have stayed to oversee the destruction of the base, but he needed to be alone to focus.

He’d just sat down when Phasma burst into his office and yanked her helmet off, storming behind his desk to snatch him up by the collar and pulling his face to hers. She grunted in disgust and shoved him back into his chair, shaking her head.

“My fucking stars, Mitaka messaged me but I had to see it for myself.” A chrome plated backhand connected with the side of his face before he could muster a response. “What the hell is wrong with you?! The Supreme Leader is gone, you are the leader now! I know you’re upset but if you drink before your shift we could lose it all. If you give them a reason to declare you unfit for command who is going to stop them? Do you realize how precarious all this is? We need a force user to keep that funding from Snoke’s affiliates the Outer Rim until we can secure our own. We need a force user to hold over people’s heads. You know this.”

“Phasma…” he sighed “I’m at a total loss as to the best plan of action in this situation. I don’t fully understand how the force works, and if I take her off life support she might die, if I leave her in bacta she might die. I need- the First Order needs her, that much is apparent. The bridge knows Ren is dead so I need to make a statement and soon, before someone decides to mobilize for new leadership.”

“Kylo Ren isn’t dead, though.”

Hux scoffed in frustration, “Yes, well we don’t know if he’s alive either! He’s as good as dead as far as I’m concerned- Ichara chopped off half his damn arm. I suspended his codes last night, he won’t have access to any of our resources, and I put out an underground bounty with my more trusted scum of the galaxy.”

“I’m going to handle this for right now. I’m relieving you for the rest of your shift. Go to your quarters for the remainder of the day. That’s an order, Armitage. Now leave before I drag your ass down the halls myself. We’ll say you’re fatigued from combat last night. Go.”

He rose wearily, rubbing his cheek. “I appreciate the tough love, Phasma, but you have metal hands for kriffsake.” he muttered. “Keep me up to date with the destruction of the base and what the scans on D’Qar find. They’re likely foolish enough to try the same ploy again.”

Phasma thunked down in his chair once the doors closed behind him. She was a heartbeat away from
being General, and while Hux was her friend, she wasn’t about to lose the shot at what she had fought so hard for.

“He should have developed feelings for someone who could stay out of harm’s way.” she mumbled. Cybernetic augmentation was fairly common in the wake of severe bodily damage, and if anyone knew their way around that field it was Mara. She sent her a message requesting to meet in the medical bay and gave Mitaka lead over the bridge.

They were working on an unknown but obviously tight deadline. Mara was out of breath when she burst through the doors, “I got here as fast as I could, I just need to catch my breath, but… but I’m ready. I was thinking about it on the way down, and-”

Phasma smiled under her helmet. “Catch your breath while you listen to me. It’s imperative that she’s coherent as soon as possible. I’m enough of a deterrent to keep any disloyal officers in check for now, but with Ren gone and no threat of a force user to hold over their heads, I’m afraid something might rise up before we can stop it. It’s primarily the old Imperials, most of which have died off, but it’s not a good time to be lax.”

“If what I’m thinking of works, we should have everything we need onboard.”

Hours passed, Mara working at a breakneck speed on her tablet, punching in equations and sketching up mechanics. Phasma stood watch, sporadically going up to the bridge to remind everyone of her presence. A handful of Phasma’s most trusted were tasked with fetching various parts from all over the ship, and a makeshift workstation was wheeled in for the fabrication that would have to take place in the medbay.

“Oh, I think I’ve got it. This pump right here can circulate bacta, but we’ll have to keep the damaged areas separated, leaving her with about 30% lung capacity while she heals. This O2 concentrator can mount to her face to mimic the environment of the bacta tank. I heard about her force healing thing, and we’ll have to adjust fitments as the wounds heal, if they heal, but this will get her moving. Everything will be fairly easy to swap out, and once the initial pieces are made I’m having ones done in varying sizes so we can slowly phase the cybernetics out… like I said, assuming she can heal. If not, this will work as long as she does.”

Phasma’s scrolled through the schematics to get to the final design. “I don’t know that Hux will agree to this.”

“You need to do something, Phas. You’re not about to be the General of the First Order for no reason. He’s your friend, and you know him better than I do… but sometimes people can’t see the right thing to do because they’re too close to the problem. Look at how he’s handling this situation- he’s fallen down from that ivory tower.”

She sighed, but Mara was right. “It’s true. He’s no longer objective. Do it.”

Mara only let her two most trusted engineers in on the details of the project, and had been keeping them up to date with the progress. Most fabrication had already begun as doctors and medical droids pored over the schematics, preparing everything to transfer her from the bacta to the operating table. The process was fairly streamlined, but she’d have to be on a system in between removing her and the implantation to keep her alive.

Phasma had seen a lot of gore in her life, but the sputtering gasp when they removed the oxygenation lines was enough to make her stomach turn. Ichara struggled to breathe, eyes rolled back in her head
as she arched her back, air simultaneously sucking in through her throat and the hole in the right side of her chest. She tried speak before her mouth contorted into a soundless scream. The droids worked quickly, reattaching the device to her neck and administering a surgical sedative; eyelids fluttered and she went limp. They had to let her come to consciousness to be sure there was a point to trying anything at all- she had little to no brain activity in the bacta tanks, and they were worried her body was the only thing hanging on.

Further down the Commenor Run, Kylo had bypassed the asteroid field and went straight to Brental IV. It was a planet known for its pirates and sketchy deals- a place that would be easy to blend in and where few questions would be asked. He had tend to his wounds as best he could with the ship’s supplies but would require more medical assistance... and a new arm.

Luckily for him they were in the process of moving the base, and there was a decent amount of supplies. He’d managed to remove his tunic and find loosely fitting clothes to disguise the sharp blackness of his First Order outfit. Blasters and other valuable goods in the cargo hold were quick and easy to sell off, but it would still take time. Before making his way into the underbelly of the markets though he had to pay docking fees. Kylo felt his way down a panel beside one of the lights near the ramp and punched it. Sure enough, it popped open to reveal the secret stash of credits his father always kept there.

“This ship is full of so many secrets.” he mumbled to himself … and so many ghosts.

While a shop worked on his new arm he’d returned to the ship, curled up on one of the beds in the back to wallow in misery. It was all so surreal. Never did he expect to be ousted by Hux, nor would he ever have believed that he’d be piloting his father’s ship in escape… one handed. He was angry with himself for letting his guard down with such a skilled adversary, freezing as if it was his first kill instead of ending it immediately. At least she paid for the maiming with her life. He could still hear the sounds of Hux’s shrill voice echoing off the angles of the base behind him as he ran.

Kylo didn’t have the time to enjoy it then, but he did now. “He might have his coveted throne now, but what did it cost him?”

He eventually managed to sleep, but it was troubled. Something kept seeming to whisper and he’d jump awake, expecting to see someone standing over him. He chalked it up to paranoia and fatigue, pulling the rough woolen blanket up and over his head in case it was a draft from the circulation vents. He managed a few hours of rest until a piercing shriek of agony across the force yanked him from his sleep.

He sat bolt upright, struggling to pull the blanket off from over his head. When he brushed the hair back from his face he could barely make out a figure flickering before him. It was as if it was made of smoke, tiny flashes of light from within the form revealing the faint outline of a woman.

“That’s impossible, I killed you.”

The figure solidified for a fraction of a second before disappearing, but what he saw didn’t make sense. He reached for her gently across the force and felt nothing of her presence.

“So this is how madness begins.” He flopped back down and pulled the covers back over him like he was hiding from a monster in his closet… it seemed his days of being a monster had passed.
"It was hard enough to fly this thing solo" hurr hurr I'm insufferable, sorry :P

Everybody had a horrible time, I'm sorry to do this to you friends. It gets better though, I promise!
The next chapter should be posted Friday <3

Thank you again to my wonderful readers, I'm so glad you've stuck with it thus far!
Chapter Summary

I hope this is a good ending, guys. I'm totally gonna do a prologue prolly :P I've had a lot going on lately and really wanted to get what I had done posted.

I'll get this tweaked and beta'd on Sunday so forgive my mistakes!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Hux had fallen asleep at the desk in his quarters, face buried in the crook of his arm. His hunched form was surrounded by databanks regarding force lore. So much of it was contradictory and half the rules seemed arbitrary at best, only serving to further his disdain for the power. He’d put his head down for just a moment, telling himself that closing his eyes might improve his focus. It wasn’t even an entire minute before he’d drifted out of consciousness; his body grateful for the rest it so desperately needed. A vibration of the holopad under his face brought him to with a start, grimacing at the soreness in his neck and back from the strange sleeping position.

- Sir, she should be waking any moment now. This is a temporary fix but will be sufficient until she’s completely healed.

- Mara quickly returned to her post at engineering after what happened. Only Phasma remained, waiting in the hallway outside of the medical bay. Hux came flying around the corner, walking as quickly as he could without breaking into a run. She put a hand out and stopped him.

“Sir. I had to do what was necessary to bring her back, for the good of the First Order. Know that this was the only way. We’re to go to Arkanis tomorrow evening, don’t forget.”

Hux narrowed his eyes “Phasma, why are you saying this? What did you do?”

“She didn’t take it well, but she’s in there waiting for you. I suggest you speak with her.”

The doors slid open to reveal destruction behind them. Sparks shot from destroyed control panels, wiring hung loose from the ceiling, and save the light by the door the room was dark. Hux squeezed past an overturned surgery table that had been thrown at the wall. One of the doctors was huddled underneath a medical station. As his eyes adjusted to the low light he could make out the figure of a woman standing at the back of the room. He approached slowly, the paced breath of a mechanized respirator cutting through the sizzle of destroyed electronics.

“Ichara…”

“I had his neck between my blades.” The tone of her voice was barely recognizable through the modulation. She raised her hand to the side and clenched it in a fist. “I could have killed him.”

“I am using every available resource to find him. He won’t escape us.”
“But I saved him... for you. ”

Hux was a few paces behind her, fiddling with the edge of his glove as he tended to do when he was nervous. Just as he reached a hand out to touch her shoulder she spun around. The gleam of the respirator over her mouth and nose reflected the flickering light of sparks. Hoses ran down her neck and connected to a bacta pump implanted in her chest, the lights from controls flickering under her robes. Phasma promised she’d take care of it, but he hadn’t expected this.

“What have you done to me, Hux? What did I let you do to me?”

He swallowed before responding, steeling himself for whatever might come. “I did what had to be done.”

Her hand shot up to his throat “How dare you.”

He winced, but there was no pressure. “The scans said there was no sign of life, that you wouldn’t heal. I didn’t believe them. Trying to bring you back like this… it was the only way.” She stared him for for a second before releasing him.

“Maybe I should have just died then.” She growled, shoving past him to leave and using the force to sling everything that was in her way at the walls.

Hux pinched the bridge of his nose, one lone tear slipping past the thumb of his leather glove. Frustration bubbled over- his nerves were shot. When he looked back up the softness dropped from his tone and he yelled over the sounds of things breaking. “Ichara! Don’t tell me I brought you back just so you could be an insufferable fucking idiot!”

She stopped in her tracks and he continued on. “Frankly, I’m selfish and I didn’t want to lose you, I’d do anything to keep that from happening. I should have let you kill Ren, you’re right. This happened because you didn’t… because you did something to make me happy. All of this is my fault, Ichara, and I’m sorry. I’m going to fix it, I promise you. Read my damn thoughts if you don’t trust me, just, please know that I’m sorry for this.” He hadn’t apologized so much in one breath since his father was alive.

She turned around to look at him, face hidden in shadow, and said nothing. The only sound in the room was the beat of his heart and the hiss of the mechanized breathing.

He walked towards her, stopping a few feet away. “Just... please... I’ve missed you so much.” He didn’t mean for it to sound so pitiful, but it was true.

“I’m a monster.” her reply crackled, the whisper barely picked up by the modulator.

Hux shook his head “No. No you’re not. This-” he motioned over the implants. “This is superficial, it’s temporary. I don’t care about any of that.” She flinched when he put a hand on the bottom of the metal surrounding her jaw and lifted her face to meet his. “Even if it was forever, there is nothing the galaxy could do to you that would make me love you any less.”

He gently wrapped his arms around her, tucking her under his chin. Amidst the sparks and the destruction, the warmonger and his beast held each other tight.
Rey was in the medbay on the star cruiser Moirana wearing a loose fitting robe over the bacta patches across her torso. Rose offered encouragement as she tested out the new mechanical arm. Her responses were short as she stared off; light years away, lost in a swirling sea of guilt and sadness.

“You picked that up perfectly, look!”

“Yep.”

“Now reach across and touch your shoulder… that’s great!”

“Thank you, Rose.”

“Rey… you have to stop torturing yourself. You didn’t make a mistake, you just had too much faith in goodness of people. I’m not force sensitive, but I think maybe that has something to do with the light in you, and that’s a good thing.”

“The death of my friends, the loss of the base… all that’s on me. I ignored the advice of those more knowledgeable than me because of my ego and saving him was something I needed. I know what it’s like to be saved without realizing you needed saving- I can… well, could… see the same in him, and it broke my heart to think of someone else struggling in that pain.”

“I can’t begin to understand, Rey.”

“Do you mind leaving me for a moment, Rose? I just…” a tear slid down her cheek. “I just need a minute.”

Rose patted her on the shoulder. “Sure, sure I’ll be back in a little bit, okay? Do you need anything?”

“I could go for a snack, if you don’t mind.”

She smiled softly and saluted. “Consider it done.”

A newfound somberness hung around Rey like a cloud since the massacre on Balamin. It wasn’t as much the physical butchering from Ichara as it was the spiritual gash Kylo left across her heart. As she bled out in the shadows he made eye contact with her for a sliver of a second before he turned and ran, saving himself. She closed her eyes and swallowed back the sadness of the memory.

When she opened them he was sitting on the medical table across from her.

“I knew you’d be alright.”

“No thanks to you, Kylo Ren. Hux was about twenty feet from me, I’m lucky he didn’t kill me on the spot.”

“How did you escape?”

“My friends. You know, people who actually care about me.”

“Ah. I suppose you’re angry with me for not taking you. If I had tried they would have killed both of us for sure… I had no choice. If you’d listened to me and stayed out of my fight like I’d told you to,
"You'd be fine."

"You're unbelievable! Is that what you've been telling yourself? Only a few days before you killed her, she told me that you'd leave me bleeding out. I should have listened."

"What you should have done was left me on that ship, Rey. I never asked for you to save me."

"You didn't, but I did... and I don't regret doing it."

He stared at her for a moment, eyes searching her face for an answer. "Why?"

"I still believe Ben Solo is in there somewhere... no one is ever truly gone. When he wants help and when he needs someone, I will be there. I will always be there. But not to Kylo Ren, not to you. It was a difficult lesson that I had to experience first-hand. All the advice in the world couldn't turn me from my convictions or from my need to save you... save him. But right now? You're not deserving of the compassion I have to offer."

He looked down, lips moving like he had something to say but was swallowing back the words.

"Leave me alone, Kylo. I don't want to see your face in front of me again until the good man in you has beaten the monster... if he even can."

"And what if-" She was gone when he looked up. A sharp shock distracted him as his mechanized arm came to life.

The technician popped into the doorway, looking around the room as Kylo flexed the black metal fingers. "Not bad for such short notice, eh? Put a glove over it and it'll look like the real thing."

It was much more crude than anything the First Order would have made for him, but it would serve its purpose until he could procure something of higher quality. Part of the shell had clearly been the arm of a droid at one point, the red lettering on the side still visible from the poor attempt at buffing it away. There was more wiring exposed than he would have felt comfortable with, but he was sure there were some parts on the ship that he could use to remedy it.

"It's sufficient."

"Oh, one more thing, though, it'll be 1000 more credits."

He balked at the absurd price "I've already paid you more than enough for this piecemeal limb, what's the meaning of this?"

"Yeah, see, but..." the technician leant forward secretively. "That was before I knew you were Kylo Ren. They're saying you're dead, you know. I imagine I'd get a lot more than 1000 credits for you, so I think it's fair."

Kylo laughed. It was a deep, genuine laugh that shook his shoulders and almost brought a tear to his eye. The gravity of the entire situation had just sunk in and it was all he found himself capable of at the moment.

"I heard what that girl said, and" the technician reached up and flipped his hood back "You even have the scar in the pictures." His laughter stopped abruptly at the bold act.
“If I was Kylo Ren, wouldn’t you be in extreme danger?”

“Well I have cameras, and heck!” The man’s hands flew to his throat in an attempt to pry the invisible fingers from his windpipe.

“I don’t care what you have, and neither will you- not anymore.” With a flick of his wrist he snapped his neck and quickly pulled the hood back over his face before rushing from the shop. It wasn’t till he was in the cockpit maneuvering the Falcon into wild space that he allowed himself a sigh of relief.

The implants made some movements awkward and somewhat painful, and Hux did everything he could to make her comfortable. He refused to let her be alone and had her propped up on pillows in his bed, a medical droid standing silently in the corner should she need anything.

He was in his uniform pants and the black tank top he wore underneath the many layers of his uniform, laid back beside her, typing away at his datapad. Speeches came to him naturally, but he had to ensure this one was absolutely flawless. There was one particular part he kept coming back to but didn’t yet have the answer he needed to fill it out. With everything that had happened he was afraid to ask, and with each revision he paused over it for a second before scrolling on.

“Am I bothering you?” She mostly laid in silence, doing her best to meditate and regain strength.

“Not at all. If you were I wouldn’t be in here.” Normally any such distraction would grate on his nerves, but every rhythmic hiss reminded him that the dethroning of Kylo Ren was a success... and that she hadn’t been killed on that platform. He set his data pad down and leant over to her, but she looked away. He reached over with a huff, turning her face back to him.

“If anything that bothers me. Stop it. I told you I don’t care, I’m just grateful to have you back.” He pushed himself up and kissed just above the metallic clasp in the corner of her jaw. She looked up at him, eyes expressing the smile that her mouth couldn’t convey.

“Well the sound of my breathing... it’s irritating me... I’d like to sleep, but I can’t.”

He waved the droid over and it administered a light sedative. She melted into the pillows with a sigh and drifted from consciousness. He wished he could make her understand that her current state wasn’t anything to be embarrassed of. It was a testament to her strength, and the sight of her would instill both fear and admiration into the troops... as well as their enemies. With the change in leadership came the need for a new wave of literature, and having her and Phasma at his side would be wonderful for propaganda.

Hux laid back and returned to his speech, reworking and tweaking his words to perfection. After some time the blank spot scrolled onto screen again and he bit his lip. Ichara needed a new title and placement, there was obviously no point in simply calling her ‘the apprentice’ anymore. There were a few options, but he wasn’t sure how to broach the topic with her in this state- it almost seemed a little insensitive.

He propped himself up to look at her; despite all the mechnation she looked peaceful beside him. He shimmied up the mountain of pillows against his headboard to gently rest his head on her shoulder. There was a stillness and a peace he found in her presence that he’d never allowed himself the luxury
of indulging in, something he wasn’t sure was even attainable on his own. He closed his eyes, placing his arm over her gently. What was supposed to be a brief rest for his eyes turned into a deep sleep as exhaustion overtook him.

When her eyelids fluttered open she realized Hux was half draped over her, and the soft glow of the datapad screen could be seen still clutched in his hand. She held her breath, listening to the soft sound of his breathing as he slept; in such a simple moment all the chaos in their lives fell away and she could just be. She took her left hand and carefully slipped the console free from his grasp, reading through the first few paragraphs. The last bracket just had her name and question marks after it. She went to scroll down to see the rest, but at the touch of an unfamiliar fingerprint the screen locked itself and gave a warning beep.

Of course.

Hux came to at the noise, rubbing the sleep from his eyes as he sat upright. She set the pad down beside her, trying to stifle a gasp of pain as she turned and put her feet on the floor.

“I need to stretch my legs. I’ll be back.”

“What? Where are you going?” he picked up his datapad to check the time, wondering if he’d truly slept through the entire night. “It’s three in the morning, you should rest”

“I just need to move, I’m stiff.” He came around the side of the bed and took her hands, helping her to stand.

“Well if you’re going to insist on it, then take the droid with you… and two of the stormtroopers posted outside.”

“If you insist, then I will.” He smiled softly and kissed her on the forehead, retrieving her folded robe from the side table. He helped her slip it on one arm at a time, and she tugged the hood over her face.

Hux laid in bed after she left, unable to return to sleep. After thirty minutes of tossing and turning he resigned himself to the fact that rest was over for the night. He made a pot of tea and returned to working on the speech, staring at the blank space again. He knew what he wanted her to be, but every time he thought about it he could feel his palms start to sweat and quickly scrolled on past to the next paragraph. To further antagonize him a message popped up in the corner of the screen; the uniform department required his signing off on the new designs.

‘Make the two bands on the sleeve a solid strip of gold.’ He paused for a minute before continuing. ‘Do the same on the robe, replace the red with two bands of gold. Phasma’s cape is fine with the silver bars, she’ll be keeping her armor and will not require the standard General’s uniform.’ He polished off his thermos of tea and left to go find her. When she wasn’t in her quarters, he had a strange feeling he knew where she’d be.

Ichara didn’t know why, but she found herself wandering Kylo’s quarters as if she walked the grounds of a haunted tomb. It had remained untouched—burned rubble still scattered throughout from his fit of destruction. She sat on the edge of the bed that would never be made again and rifled through the few contents in the drawer of the nightstand. There was a small tub of linament salve, a few pills to help with sleep, and a pendant. She recognized it as the face of a direwolf, carved from one of the greenish pebbles of Aleen. She pocketed it and left to the library, running her fingers along the databanks and books that lined the walls.

She told herself it was a march of victory, like a king making rounds to oversee the conquered lands.
Across the galaxy, sat on a dingy bench in a pirate’s chop shop, Kylo still had one thing very much in common with Ichara, though.

They both felt like their victory was a sham.

She contemplated reaching out for him when footsteps echoed down the hallway behind her.

“I had an odd feeling I’d find you here.” Hux walked up to stand beside her, staring out the large transparisteel wall at his home planet of Arkanis, swirling like an azure orb below them.

“I read your speech. I see you’re going with Emperor as opposed to Supreme Leader- I like it.”

“Yes, well anytime I think of the latter I’m reminded of Snoke or that gargantuan bastard. Besides, it was my father that built this army; I believe I’m entitled to something that sounds a little more dynastic.”

“Have you given any thought as to where I fit into all of this?”

“I, yes, ah, I’ve been mulling that topic, quite a bit, really, and well, you are going to stay, aren’t you? With the First Order? Of course, you’re free to leave, if that’s what you want. I’m aware that your cousin’s block on Canto Bight is legally yours, and-”

“Yes.”

Though he knew it was a possibility, he hadn’t expected that answer and it was like a punch in the gut that sucked the air from his lungs. He looked away, hoping to hide the emotions that flickered across his face. “Ah. You want to leave. I see.”

She reached out and put a hand on his shoulder “Hux, look at me.” he lifted his chin and turned his head slightly to look down at her from the corner of his eye “Don’t be dense, of course I want to stay, but I understand if that’s not conducive to-”

“No! No, I was hoping you would stay... I want you to stay.” She leant against him and slipped her arm down around his waist.

“Good. I was going to be very upset with you otherwise.”

“Actually, I…” he took a deep breath and turned to face her, taking her hands in his. “This is going to sound, perhaps, slightly insensitive, considering all that you’ve been through, but…” she arched an eyebrow and he looked down at their hands, squeezing hers tight. “It would be quite sensible, I think, if you were to be, well, the Empress of the First Order... assuming that’s something that interests you, of course. We’ve always had a force user in a position of power, and as you’re the one that ultimately removed Ren it would be logical for you to stay, and…” he drifted off and used every ounce of effort he had to drag his eyes up to hers.

She hadn’t realized she’d been holding her breath until there was moment of silence between them. “What are you saying, Hux?”

He cursed himself for being unable to force the simple words from his mouth. “I’m telling you that I want you to take the mantle of Empress beside me... for, for the good of the First Order.”
“Armitage, are you asking...”

“Yes, yes I do believe that I am.”

She pulled her hands from his and reached up to depress the release buttons on each side of her mask, pulling the concentrator from her face. Her voice was little more than a whisper.

“Do you love me?”

“Without question. Yes, I love you.” There was a small flutter of fear in his stomach at speaking the words. The poets incessantly waxed on about the dramatic terror that was love, so he supposed that simply meant he was doing it right; and if he couldn’t help but love someone, he was going to do it the best he could.

“Then yes, yes I will be your Empress.”

“Good. Excellent.” his nerves still had him shaken and it was all he could think to say, frozen by the overwhelming emotion of the moment.

Her shoulders shook in silent laughter as she smiled up at him. “There is no one else in the galaxy quite like you, Hux.”

His brows knit together confusion “What do you mean by that?”

“I mean that I’m lucky you’re mine.”

He gingerly cupped her face in his hands and kissed her softly before holding her tight. There would be no more secrets, no more hiding affection in the shadows. Snide speculations would be reduced to simple fact. Later that evening on Arkanis their dedication to each other would be announced to the universe…

The galaxy didn’t stand a chance.
Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! I hope you guys liked it!

Hux is my cinnamon roll and he deserves to come out on top, that's pretty much what inspired me to take the one-shot and turn it into an entire fic :P

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Here's a doodle of our evil space muffins <3

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