Beyond the Stars

by thefisalie

Summary

"They're building another Death Star..."

Fresh from their escape from Crait and subsequent recruitment of new Resistance fighters, Poe Dameron and Finn are once again thrust into the thick of it. Budding romance, a case of mistaken identity and a riproaring adventure. Finished, updates Fridays. Spoilers for The Force Awakens and The Last Jedi.

Notes

There are a few violent chapters so I will put warnings in front of each as applicable! Also many thanks to my friends Laurel, Effie, Tali and Kat, without whom I would not have finished this.

If you notice something that you'd like me to put in the chapter notes as a trigger warning for others don't hesitate to contact me!

Comments are appreciated, concrit is unnecessary unless I have made a potentially racist blunder. I consider this story to be a published and finished work and will not be edited further.

Now translated into Portuguese!!
Além das Estrelas: Archive Of Our Own
Além das Estrelas: Spirit Fanfiction
Ten

Poe

“They’re building another Death Star.”

These were the words of the transmission carried by a shaky-looking astromech droid from its former pilot. It looked like it might be an old C1 unit, salvaged from the ruins of Resistance bases across the galaxy as they fled for their lives and livelihood.

The C1 unit had insisted on gathering a caucus of Resistance fighters, including the General, before it would allow its message to be played. The groan that came from the crowd was a palpable swell of ocean surf, rising in crescendo as murmurs built beneath the surface. And the droid hadn't even finished its message. The hologram it projected shows one of Poe’s newest recruits: a spunky fighter from the Morellian Commonwealth, a young Artidoac named Troth who had been practically glowing when Finn had handed him the keys to his Y-wing.

Now, presumably, he was dead, like so many before him. The weight on Poe’s shoulders increased by a grain of rice: more than enough to tip the scales. He had been the one to send Troth and a handful of others on a scouting mission, but that had been all they were supposed to do. They had been ordered not to interfere or engage.

The look Leia shot him across the room is one he knew well. You taught him and so he did what you would have. He acted like a total jackass and disobeyed direct orders. I should demote you again but it seems like nothing will teach you that life is not to be thrown away.

If only she knew that he understood. Now more than ever. The first few losses under his command really hit him hard. But as a soldier you couldn’t allow yourself to become consumed by guilt or you would never be able to walk the front lines more than that first time. And as his responsibilities increased… the bombing run on the Destroyer, his subsequent demotion, the loss of the many rebellion fighters as they floated, defenseless, in pods… with so few left at hand, every loss felt the more significant. He felt it weighing on his shoulders every day, like he was carrying the already weighty backpack of command and every death was another ten fucking pounds he had to lug around with him.

Leia had not given him charge of the rebel recruitment but she had placed him just barely under those who were. After so many years of hardening himself to new faces that might be thrown away in a battle, he now had to drum up excitement to instill in young pilots from across the galaxy. The desire to fight and live had to feel genuine or none of them would ever accept the office. Now, Poe had no problems feeling ferocity about the Resistance so strong that it made his hands shake but with new recruits... sometimes it felt a little like he was leading lambs to the slaughter.

Poe glanced again at Leia, the leader of the rebel Resistance. She felt every death, he knew. He could see it in her eyes sometimes when she looked over maps, the way she would zone out of a conversation to stare into the middle distance with a look of pure sorrow painting her beautiful features. He felt like she was someone he knew so well that he could practically hear her voice in his own head.

Leia’s attention, like everyone else in the room, was now fixed on the C1 unit, whose pilot had been shooting a few enemy soldiers, was now ready to deliver his message.

“What I meant to say was that they’re building at least ten Death Stars. Ten fucking Death Stars!
All at the same time, across the stars. I’ve managed to secure their locations, but I didn’t have time
to look through all the data I got. I’m not going to make it back alive. If I hold them off, I hope that
I can get C1-54 back to you with as much information as I can.” Troth smiled then, revealing his
enormous teeth. “May the Force be with you all.”

The hologram winked out, but not before it gave a glimpse of Troth’s face as he turned from the C1
to face whoever was coming after him. It was a look Poe knew very well: hadn’t he done the same
for BB-8 when he had found the map to Luke Skywalker? And he would do it again. The last time
he had not only recovered his droid but had gained two new friends.

As the rest of the room exploded into a chaotic storm of shouting, Poe turned to check on said
friends. Finn and Rey were standing shoulder-to-shoulder, probably whispering in each others’
ears. Rey looked distant, like she had ever since coming back from her spiritual journey to
wherever Luke Skywalker had been sequestered. But when Finn nudged her with his elbow and
muttered something, her nose crinkled in a silent laugh.

Poe took his duties as a pilot very seriously and always made sure he was sitting with or near his
squadron. Today they were near the middle of the room, somewhere Finn would never choose to
sit. He didn’t like to be the centre of attention and yet, he somehow always managed to get himself
there anyway.

“Those slimy bastards,” Leia grumbled. She spoke quietly, but every other voice in the room fell
silent all the same. It wasn’t surprising: there was a reason she was the de facto leader of the
Resistance. Raised as a princess, she had been part of international government on Alderaan
alongside her parents for most of her life. Until their untimely deaths at the hands of the very first
Death Star, that is. The Rebel Alliance had always looked to her if not as a leader then as a focal
centrepoint whose beliefs never wavered.

Unlike the rest of the rebels in the room, General Leia was composed, even in what Poe was sure
was abject rage. The fingers of her left hand twitched slightly: she covered it by leaning forward on
the computer readout in front of her but Poe knew her tells. “They think that we are weak because
our numbers have dwindled somewhat.” She paused, probably for dramatic effect, as she looked
around the room. She always took care to make everyone feel included, and when you felt Leia’s
gaze in your very soul? You damn well felt included. “We are strong. We will resist the First Order
as we always have. Would the current heads of the Red, Gold and Black squadron please stay
behind? Everyone else, you may return to your stations.”

You knew some serious shit was going down when Leia didn’t let everyone stay behind to speak
their minds. Usually she was all about hearing every voice, but when things got too real, you
couldn’t just let the entire rebel base in on a plan. Especially when time-sensitive matters were at
hand. That was the whole reason why you had squadron leaders: once a decision had been made,
the leaders could trickle the information down to whoever needed to know, and they could spread
the news from there.

Poe, as the current Black Leader, looked longingly at Finn and Rey briefly before turning back to
the General. People trickling out through the various exits would get in his way if he tried to walk
over to her just yet, but he could at least pay attention.

Leia’s attention, however, was fixed in the direction he had just turned from. “Finn, Rey,” she said
clearly. “We’re going to need both of you too.”
“Me?”

Finn vaguely registered the gentle punch Rey delivered to his upper bicep as he stared in shock at General Organa. He had been looking forward to going back to his bunk and brooding quietly for a few hours about the new development. Or maybe following Rey to one of the many rooms that functioned as weapons and fighting training rings. She could lift more weight than he could but he was reasonably sure that was because of her desert upbringing and also, hello, *the Force*. He couldn’t be expected to compete with that. It didn’t make him less of a man, it just made her more than human.

Finn was fine with that.

What he *wasn’t* fine with was being the centre of attention and the General hadn’t looked away from him yet. She’d locked eyes with him, and he swore she had this Force thing going on too because holy, she could just read your mind like it was an open book. At least, she could read his… maybe that was saying something about how he presented himself.

Anyway. He looked away, to the few people who were still leaving the room, and then back to the General. Nope. She still had her eyes fixed on him.

“I mean, no offense General,” he said, rubbing his cheek reflexively. It was just this side of stubbly, since he hadn’t shaved since yesterday. One of the perks of being a free man: he didn’t have to stick to regulation schedules. He still shaved though... he wasn’t quite ready for a Luke Skywalker goatee. “No offense. But… why would you want me here?”

General Organa gestured her hand in a slow, compelling wave. It beckoned him forward. *Definitely* a Force thing. “Come closer, I’m not going to shout.”

Inwardly, Finn grumbled. How come all these people were always Forcing around with their waves and et ceteras? Rey was constantly doing it now, although she seemed largely unaware that she had four tasks running at any given time. General Organa seemed to do it almost unconsciously as well. “I’m just saying, General,” he tried to say, but she held up a hand. He shut up.

“You are a former Stormtrooper, are you not?” the General asked, and, ah. There it was. It made sense to have him stay behind for his ex-Stormtrooper expertise. He straightened a little and nodded. “You will have to willingly volunteer for this mission,” she said, and now Finn was confused again. Nobody had said anything about a mission yet, unless they’d all been talking behind his back while he hadn’t been paying attention for two point five seconds.

“Sorry, but what mission again?” Finn asked.

General Organa gave Finn a Look: eyebrows raised, lips thin, eyes fierce. “Those fascist motherfuckers think they can wipe out all dissenters in the galaxy at once. We’re going to stop them.”

“I mean,” Finn said. He looked at Rey, who seemed to somehow already be on the same page as the General. The rest of the squadron leaders seemed to be at least closely as perplexed as he was. Poe gave him a small smile like he didn’t know what was going on but was on board. “How though?”

Finn checked Poe’s face again, but the man had just shifted his focus to the General. He was a study in concentration; his forehead was creased from years of planning and calculating. The curls
of his hair had grown a bit longer than Finn was used to seeing: there must not have been enough
time recently for him to get it cut. Finn, of course, cut his own hair in a classic military buzz. That
was another thing he’d been unable to shake since his days in the First Order.

“Not easily,” General Organa said. “I believe you would know more than I do about the inner
workings of the First Order.” She gave Poe a Look, which he responded to instantly.

“How likely would you say it is for someone to sneak aboard a new Death Star?”

“In an X-Wing?” Finn asked. He shifted his weight, feeling an uneasy swirl in the pit of his
stomach from the look Poe was now giving him. Equal parts calculating and thoughtful. Finn
didn’t like it, not one bit.

Poe grinned. “Come on, buddy. In a First Order ship.”

“We have a First Order ship?”

“You’re avoiding the question,” Poe said.

could be possible. Could be! You’d have to have the rolling access codes, uniforms? You’d have to
know the ranking officers aboard ship by name, class, rank? Not to mention, all of the people
doing this would need to act like Stormtroopers...”

He trailed off, feeling the impact of his words a moment too late. Everyone around the computer
readout was staring at him. Even the droids in the room were staring, he could swear. BB-8 made
some combination of beeps that had everyone nodding in agreement. Was Stormtrooper training
severely lacking in basic droid languages or were these rebels just plain weird about their robot
pets?

“As I said before,” General Organa said, her tone gentle as though she may be speaking to some
volatile former Stormtrooper or something. She could have that one. “You would need to be a
willing volunteer for the plan I have in mind. If not, I need to know now so we can come up with
something else. It is entirely up to you.”

The thing was, Finn believed her. He felt the pressure of the room, the weight of the other rebels’
hopes, but from Leia he felt the power of a choice. He could opt out of the rebellion entirely, could
walk away without another glance and she would work to find a way around him. Would she be
disappointed? Yes. But would he be free to make any choice he wished under her command? Also
yes.

He hadn’t been a rebel for very long, in heart or mind: a few months ago he had just been Finn,
former Stormtrooper in a coma. But in the time since, he had been handed some small
responsibilities. They were only a few cleaning duties that didn’t put his life in immediate danger,
so he had happily accepted in order to be near his friends. It had been right up his alley too, since
he’d served in various sanitation positions for years aboard the Starkiller.

He was slowly coming to realize that for the Resistance fighters the rebellion was their lives, and
to die at its hands while seeing it succeed was a price they were all willing to pay. He might never
have the passion for it they did, but if he didn’t help them now, what could their outcome be?

What could the outcome of the galaxies be?

Suddenly, Poe’s eyes flicked over to his and Finn realized that he’d been staring for what was
probably a few minutes. Now they were making direct eye contact, man to man. And what Finn
saw there cemented his waffling decision. He’d seen it before, when he had been sure he wanted out of the First Order but not sure how to go about it. The moment he had taken off his helmet and seen the look in Poe’s eyes go from anger and fear to respect and camaraderie…

“I’ll do it,” Finn said, and it was as simple as that. Poe smiled in a way that transformed his face and took ten years off. There must have been tension in his shoulders because he seemed to almost shrug off a mental weight as he stood up a bit straighter.

“Good,” General Organa said, and she gave him an approving smile. She had an awful job, sending people off to die. At least if they volunteered there was nothing she could really do about it in the end. “Rey, we will need you as well.”

Rey nodded, and it looked like she had read the General’s mind. How come she always knew what to do in every situation? Finn envied her that, although not necessarily the life she had led to get her moxie. “You need me to find and distract Kylo Ren.”

“Unfortunately,” General Organa said with a heavy sigh. “I will always love my son, but I fear he may have lost himself in the dark side of the Force.”

“With the powers at his disposal he could easily sense our fighters infiltrating the Death Stars,” Rey said. “He would put an immediate stop to whatever plan we concoct. I believe his General is more easily duped.”

“He is also distracted by you,” General Organa said. “He probably believes he can convert you to his side with some… persuasion.”

“I agree,” Rey said. “I believe there is still light in him but do not know how to free it from the darkness.”

“That is not the priority,” General Organa said. “Your highest priority should be your safety. You are the last of the Jedi, the last who truly understands what it means to balance with the Force instead of being consumed by it. You cannot allow my son to pull you under with him.”

Rey nodded. “I will think of something,” she said.

“Good.” General Organa looked at her pilots. “Poe, I want ten pairs of infiltrators. Groups of two are not too suspicious, and I believe the Stormtroopers usually travel in this way, in case one of them decides to defect from the cause.”

She was right. How did they know that?

“None of the people you choose can be squadron leaders, and I would prefer that they not be the fighter pilots, but they are going to each have to fly into a Death Star base. I don’t think we can take a chance that they designed them all the same. The purpose of this mission is reconnaissance: if a Death Star base can be destroyed by fighter pilots, that would be our preferred method. If not, then it will be to the discretion of the infiltrators… however, if any base is destroyed the Order will be suspicious.

“If there is a way to send transmissions to and from the bases you’d have to find that as well. Communication is our greatest weapon.” She paused. “I don’t like to think of this possibility, but it may come to pass that someone might have to stay behind to complete the destruction. Let us hope that is not the case. Red Leader, I need you to get someone to find plans. All available plans and those who know how to come up with them. It might not be possible… but I need you to try. Gold Leader, all available pilots not going on these existing missions need to be ready to fly. Drill as
much as you can… we’re going to need all the practice we can get.”

“And luck,” Finn muttered.

“And luck,” General Organa agreed. She gave Finn a look that made him feel bad for muttering something in a negative tone. He should have kept it to himself, but she didn’t berate him verbally for it, instead letting him come to the conclusion himself. How come everything with these people had to be a learning experience? “Come and see me when you have a plan formulated. You are all dismissed. May the Force be with you.”

_Poe_

“Finn, I need you with me on this one,” Poe said. His friend looked a bit lost as Poe and Rey steered him out of the war room. “I’m gonna need your expertise.”

“First problem is that we don’t have _suits_,” Finn said, shooting Poe a glance. Had Poe not known the other man very well, he would have said that he seemed very composed about the whole situation, but Poe did know better. Finn was probably freaking out right about now.

“Also,” Finn said, “I’m kind of freaking out right about now?”

Poe grasped Finn’s shoulder. “Don’t worry, buddy. We’ve got this. You and me together, working as a team? We’re going to be unstoppable!”

“But the _suits_,” Finn said desperately.

“Please,” Poe said. “You remember how I got out of the wreck on Jakku and made it back here?”

Finn nodded.

“I made it back to the general wreckage area to see if I could salvage anything from the ship but it had already been sucked into the quicksand. I might not have been able to save the TIE fighter from destruction, but I sure as hell picked up every last piece of your suit I could find. You left me quite a trail to follow, buddy.”

Finn stopped walking, and since Poe had been a few steps behind him, he collided with the other man’s solid figure. Like, really solid. Stormtroopers must have had one hell of an exercise regimen. Poe had instinctively put up his hands to stop his stumble and found himself semi-awkwardly holding onto Finn for dear life.

“Sorry,” Finn said, when Poe stepped quickly away. He dropped his hands, unsure of how Finn would react to the contact. “Did you say you saved my suit?”

“Yes,” Poe said. When Finn turned to face him, his eyes were as round as moons. “Why?”

“Let me get this straight. Your first thought, on digging yourself out of whatever sand dune you’d landed in was to pick up the pieces of my stormtrooper suit, even though I’d thrown them all over the place? In the hellish heat of Jakku?”

Poe blinked. “No. My first thought was whether or not you were alright.”

He’d been running around like a chicken with its head cut off when he’d managed to extract
himself from the escape parachute. He’d found a trail of pieces small enough not to sink in the quicksand and then the swirl of sand that indicated something large had sunk only recently into the depths of the planet. How could he say that he had spent a few frantic minutes digging and another few mourning the man who he thought might have been a good friend before he’d spotted the first piece of discarded armour? And that he’d followed the trail, picking up every piece he could find until he spotted the Millennium Falcon flying away from the marketplace?

How could he also say that he had selfishly thought of the Resistance and that a stormtrooper outfit might come in handy one day and that he’d saved it in case they would need it again one day? What a conflicting mess of emotional thought to have to convey in only a few words.

“I mean I was worried you hadn’t made it out of the ship but then I saw the armour… I figured it couldn’t hurt to pick it up and take it with me back to the base. I figured you two were the ones jacking the Millennium Falcon but I couldn’t be sure until I saw you again later.”

Finn nodded, a slow smile spreading across his face. “You have my suit,” he said.

“I have your suit.” Poe said.

Finn’s eyes crinkled at the corners and he held up a finger. “You need a Stormtrooper,” he said, his smile quirking into a grin.

“I need a Stormtrooper.” Poe said, smiling back.

Finn

“We might actually be able to do this,” Finn said later, as he and Poe observed their chosen candidates. They were all around the same height and build, which was important. It would be way easier to steal regulation-sized uniforms instead of custom ones. He had shown them a few basic moves: how to walk the walk, how to hold the blaster, how to salute properly and a couple of phrases that every Stormtrooper knew.

“You think so?” Poe asked. He was inspecting their future Stormtroopers: he had ended up choosing half pilots and half willing volunteers of the right specifications. Stormtroopers didn’t all have to be the same size and build but it definitely made things easier, Finn had said.

“We still have a lot of training to do, but I think we can probably get it done in time,” Finn said. “If we can get enough uniforms for the rest of them… we should be in good shape.” Boy, the uniform was hot and sweaty. He’d forgotten how hot it was on. The black underlayer breathed nicely but the sheer amount and weight of the armour couldn’t stay cool no matter what you put under it. It was some kind of super tough engineered plastoid: the same materials they made the blasters out of. That part felt strange. He didn’t have his official blaster any longer and so he was borrowing one from the Resistance base. Not that it would matter until they were in enemy territory.

That also felt weird. Some of the Stormtroopers they were sure to meet might have once been his comrades. They’d grown up together, learned to fight together, and more importantly: they had been indoctrinated with super racist ideals together. He felt a bit of a pull, to try and convince some of his former friends that the First Order was wrong about everything, but what were the odds that any of them would actually listen? They had food and beds and really not much to complain about. Most of them must have believed the First Order nonsense about the superior races or why else
would they have all stayed behind to continue fighting?

“Uh, one question,” one of the recruits said, Finn thought her name was Wright. She raised her hand. “How do we, you know. Go to the bathroom with one of these suits?”

“Oh,” Finn said. “It’s pretty easy.” Was he turning bright red? It felt like he was. Heat flushed through his cheeks, making them feel like they were on fire. “Uh, so. There’s obviously two kinds of, er, maneuvers you may need to accomplish here. One in the, uh, front? And one in the… the back.’

Wright held up her hand again. “Even for girls?”

“Well, I mean. For girls, well,” Finn stammered. “There’s two uniforms, right. So girls can… you know. Fit. All the bits and… everything. In there?”

Poe, bless his heart, took pity on Finn. “Why don’t you go take off your suit and we can look at how you accomplish these… maneuvers… when it’s off? That might be less…”

“Embarrassing,” Wright piped up. How rude. Unbless her heart.

“I’m not embarrassed, I’m fine,” Finn grumbled. “I can just show you all now.”

Poe nodded like he one hundred percent ‘believed’ him. “Sure you’re not,” he said, holding up a hand. Was there a tinge of pink in his cheeks too? What would Poe have to be embarrassed about? It wasn’t like he was the one about to put his crotch on display here. “But let’s just take the suit off for this part. I’m sure everyone can figure out how the undergarments work in their own time.”

“Yes,” Finn said. “I’ll just go get changed then and come right back.”

Poe gave him a grateful smile. “We’ll all be here waiting.”

When Finn returned, Poe was no less tinged with pink but the rest of the group had relaxed somewhat. He laid out the separate pieces of the armour, just as he had done when he had shown them how to put them on. “Okay, so this is just like when you’re suiting up but in reverse. The catches to pop the armour bits in are not meant to just give way. But there are small release buttons all over the under suit. They’re all meant to be put on and taken off by one person, in case of an emergency.”

“Or in case you need to whiz,” a lanky male recruit said.

“Yes,” Finn said. “The pieces are not designed to come off if they’re shot: otherwise that would defeat the purpose. They can obviously be shot through at the right angles, but you have to release them to properly remove them.”

He went through the undergarment, which really resembled a normal black long-sleeved shirt and tight, form-fitting pants. Which you could really feel the breeze through, yikes. After showing everyone all of the release triggers, he cleared his throat. “Now, for the proper er, bits, there’s just velcro down there holding everything in place. So guys, you have to be careful… I mean, velcro can just pop right open if you give it the right leverage.” He was definitely red now. “I would recommend wearing underwear under the suit as an added layer of ………… protection. Against, er,
accidents.”

Everyone laughed, which made Finn feel a bit better. It was a nervous laughter but at least they were all fairly comfortable with one another. Poe’s face was still tinged with pink, and really nervous-looking too, but he laughed with the rest of them.

“Also because you’ll be wearing a stranger’s suit and I personally wouldn’t want to be going commando in another man’s long johns,” Finn said. This garnered a more comfortable-sounding laugh. When he grinned a bit at Poe the other man grinned back but it was a shaky smile. Almost like a stiff breeze might knock it right off Poe’s face.

Oh well. Not much he could do about that.

“Okay, so you all need to practice what I taught you and then we’ll have to go over the rest of it. Ranks, positions, who works where on most ships. That kind of stuff.”

Poe cleared his throat. “And we should be able to leave in a few days. The ship is supposed to be arriving here the day after tomorrow.”

Two days? Finn stared at Poe, who was now instructing their rebel recruits to have good nights rests, lots of practice, et cetera, yadda yadda, two days.

He never thought he would be going back again to another First Order ship. And he especially hadn’t thought he would be returning so soon.

Two days.

“Are you sure we’ll be ready for this?” Finn asked Poe. He’d reassembled his armour and was now more than ready to get changed back into his much more comfortable Resistance Fighter apparel.

“I don’t know but if we don’t move quickly, we’ll be heavily outgunned,” Poe said. “We’ll be lucky to get rid of one, let alone ten. We’re fortunate that Troth disobeyed my direct orders to get us this information.”

Finn nodded like a bobblehead. A thought occurred to him: “Hey, how come the Resistance is sending its best pilot to this mission? Aren’t you needed elsewhere? Like, I don’t know, flying evasive maneuvers around the Death Stars to try and end them?”

“First of all, thanks,” Poe said, smiling proudly. “And second of all, I may be the best pilot we have but we’re going to need more than just me if we’re going to succeed. And the best pilot doesn’t equate to being the best teacher of pilots. That’s who we need staying behind: hopefully they can find some more people with my knack for the throttle.”

He said it with a quirk of one eyebrow that made Finn’s mouth dry up for some inexplicable reason. “I guess that makes sense,” he said. “Who taught you how to fly?”

The edges of Poe’s mouth fell a bit: just enough that his smile made Finn’s stomach twinge with guilt. “My mother,” he said simply.

Maybe that was a touchy subject, since Poe was usually a real talker. A thought occurred to him. “Do you think Kylo Ren will really be on the Death Stars?”

“He would be stupid not to,” Poe said. “He’s many things, but I don’t think he’s so bad at math to miss the fact that we might find out about his plans.”
“I can’t believe he’s Han Solo’s kid,” Finn said. It was hard to believe that the charming smuggler he’d met only a few months ago could have spawned such a disaster for the universe. He had been assigned to Kylo Ren’s guard on two occasions, and the temper tantrums that kid could throw were legendary. Finn hadn’t known either the General or Han Solo for very long but they seemed mostly nice. Maybe a bit unstable but not so much that they should have been cursed with Kylo Ren as their progenitor. Something must have happened there to tear him away from them. And from his actions on Starkiller base, Finn wondered if it had anything to do with his father.

“Yeah,” Poe said. They’d made their way through some of the twisting corridors and were just about at the sleeping quarters. It was much less noisy in this part of the base. Noises didn’t travel well through the thick, steel walls and most people kept their rooms closed. They weren’t manually operated but did have emergency cranks to slide them open and shut in case of an emergency. But the Resistance fighters had rigged the doors so they wouldn’t open if you stood in front of them, only if you pressed a button beside the door, for privacy reasons.

Poe shook his head, a tortured look drawing his face into tense lines. “His parents weren’t perfect, but he is a bonafide monster. When he turned on Luke, years ago, he –” his voice caught in his throat but Finn could tell he had something important to say. Poe closed his eyes as though feeling the pain all over again. “He slaughtered the rest of the Jedi initiates. They were children, Finn. Just little kids. And they were friends with all of us… the younger ones were like our kid siblings or children of our own. They were so innocent and so undeserving of what he did to them. And then he killed his own father? Han Solo wasn’t that bad of a guy, you know? I mean, maybe not the ideal father but that shouldn’t have signed the warrant for his own death.”

Finn didn’t know what to say. “Wow,” he said. “I’ve only ever seen him in the First Order. I mean, he killed a lot of people then too. Mostly to show off his power or make sure we believed he would hurt us too if we got out of line. But I never saw him kill any kids… that’s really…”

“Yeah,” Poe said softly.

“Sorry,” Finn said. “For bringing it up.”

“It’s alright,” Poe said. He put his hand on Finn’s shoulder. He could feel all of the spots where Poe’s hand made contact with the black undergarment of his uniform. “Make sure you get some rest, huh? We’re going to have to check out that ship when it comes in, make sure it’s got what we need to get into that Death Star.”

“Yeah,” Finn said. He felt like a bobblehead again, he was nodding so much and he couldn’t stop. “Let me know me when it does. Thanks for your help today, too. I was really nervous, talking in front of all of you guys. You’ve all been Resistance Fighters for so long and I’m so new… thanks.”

The look Poe gave him was kind, but a little off. Finn couldn’t place how, just that the glint in Poe’s eyes seemed almost otherworldly for a moment. He could see the tiny white speck of his reflection in Poe’s eyes and wondered what the other man must be thinking. Probably something cool and collected, like how to destroy another Death Star in his sleep.
So hot. So attractive. Poe had almost forgotten. Recently all of the times they had been separated and reunited had been performed under duress. He hadn’t had a lot of time to properly look at Finn. And now, back in his Stormtrooper outfit, the one he’d been wearing when they first met? Poe could barely think of what to say.

*God damn,* that was one option, but not really a great one. *Care to show me how you remove that crotch piece again?* Neither appropriate nor romantic. More like a slimy pick-up line. And Finn deserved so much more than a sleazy hookup. He probably deserved so much more than Poe too. And he probably wasn’t even attracted to him!

What a quick turnaround, too. One minute, Poe had been feeling briefly sad and the next, Finn had straightened up a little and given him a grateful smile with those big lips and kind eyes of his. Then Poe had an extremely vivid flashback to the training session earlier, when fucking Jessika had not been able to shut up about Stormtrooper cock.

She had an impressively dirty mouth, that Pava. The second Finn had walked away, off she had gone on her decidedly not work friendly tangent, which had the other female recruit Tanya agreeing with her desire to “see what the other Stormtroopers are packing and I don’t mean their blasters”. At least Niv Lek had the decency to shut Jessika up before Finn got back, but nevertheless, the damage had been done. Poe had a majorly hard time trying to focus on anything but the crotch area after that. It had been a real struggle, and he wasn’t sure he had succeeded.

“Any time buddy,” Poe finally said, trying to diffuse his own feelings with the casual term. That would work, right? That would tell his own traitorous brain that having romantic or sexual feelings for one’s best friend who one didn’t even know if he was attracted to him at all was a bad idea, right?

Ha ha ha.

He smiled as best as he could and quickly shuffled off to his own quarters. Quickly, quickly, before the velcro on *his* pants popped open. Not that he would ever secure his penis down with velcro. Not willingly, at least. That sounded like such a bad idea for so many reasons.

Inside his room, he collapsed against the closed door with a sigh of relief. He let his head fall back, wincing when it clanged on the hard steel. The pain helped take his mind off the extremely sexual bulge of the stormtrooper jock piece at least. Until he thought about it like that again. What was he going to do?

Geez, he had better get his shit together before they went on this mission. He had to have a cool head to fly an enemy ship into an enemy star-killing base full of enemies. He couldn’t be strutting around sporting a hardon for his extremely non romantic friend and ally. That just wasn’t how you did things.

But boy, would Poe’s body not listen. It was like their training session earlier had just cemented in the animal side of Poe’s brain that he had found the one he was meant to be with. It had been a while since he had any kind of relationship too, which probably didn’t help. Being a Resistance fighter pilot took up a lot of your time, and since he’d been trying to rise through the ranks and involving himself in the bureaucratic side of the battle as well, he’d barely had a minute alone to himself in years. In his youth he had a few casual encounters with various peoples but as he got older he found that he couldn’t sleep with just anyone any more. They might fly off tomorrow and all be killed in an explosion or they might tell the whole base that Poe Dameron’s *cockpit* – to use a Leia-ism – just wasn’t as impressive as he seemed to think it was.

Not that he went around talking about that sort of thing. That wasn’t his style. If he had his way
and there was peace in the galaxy, he would be the sort of guy to take it slow, with a romantic candlelit dinner and rose petals on the bed.

But as the situation stood, he’d been alone for far too long. His prospects were limited as well. Between the people he already knew and wasn’t attracted enough to, to all of those new fresh-faced junior pilots who were twenty or more years younger than him… There was no way Finn was as old as Poe was either but at least he wasn’t sixteen and ready to blink his life out at a moment’s notice. Which made him the only person Poe had met in a long time who he could actually see himself with.

Poe groaned. This mission was going to be difficult. To say the least.

He had to focus. If his head wasn’t in the game, he could get people killed. And unlike what Leia sometimes said and maybe thought, Poe Dameron did care about the lives of his comrades. If he didn’t then he’d be just as bad as the First Order.

Which was where he was planning on sailing into in just a few days.

For the first time in a long time, Poe closed his eyes and wished that he wasn’t part of the Resistance. He could have met Finn at a bar or a market, they could have become friends and maybe more… if only life could be simpler. But how many people would have died at the hands of the First Order while Poe drank his weight in Goram?

And they probably wouldn’t have met anyway, knowing how fickle the universe could be.

Poe opened his eyes. He almost felt like he was under control and he had plans to finalize. It would have to be good enough. Maybe running scenarios through his head would help keep him grounded, at least until they were through with this mission.

If they made it through at all.
Oops, missed a week. I swear it is actually finished! No warnings this chapter.

_Finn_

Sometimes flying seemed to take _forever_. Finn clenched and unclenched his hands in his lap.

They had ended up commandeering a medium-sized cargo freighter on some little known planet that had among its natural resources some of the metal used to build the Death Star outer shell. There were several planets that the First Order would be receiving cargo from and the Resistance had borrowed a full one. Finn and the other fighters were wedged among plates of sharp-edged metal that had already been refined and hammered to the right dimensions.

The plan started out simply and then became more complex as each group split apart to investigate the subsequent space stations. First, they would land in one of the newly-built Death Stars. They would incapacitate the Stormtroopers that came onboard to inspect the cargo and take their suits. Then hopefully they would find a group of TIE fighters or if they were really lucky, the Gozanti-class cruiser that shipped them from base to base. They would have to find TIE pilot uniforms, Stormtrooper uniforms and possibly some upper management uniforms for the remaining fighters who would then commandeer what ships they could to escape the Death Star.

Unloading a freighter didn’t take very long so a crew member had been added to fly the freighter back to the planet they had borrowed it from in case they needed to fill it up and fly it a second time.

It seemed backwards: delivering material resources to the very people who were trying to blow up the entire galaxy but if they could find the destruction points of the Death Stars then their small contribution theoretically shouldn’t make a difference to the First Order’s forward momentum.

The freighter rattled: it had never been built for primary use in long-distance hyperspace. It was only supposed to be in hyperspace for brief jumps from planet to planet, not to jump over three thousand systems. Finn tried to quell the matching rattle in his heart but it was difficult when his hands wouldn’t stop shaking.

Poe appeared in the doorway to the cargo bay, grabbing a handhold on the wall when the freighter shook in what Finn thought was an concerning way. The pilot didn’t seem shaken at all, just hopped over a locked container and crouched down in front of Finn. Concern creased his forehead as he looked into Finn’s face. Finn tried to look away but when Poe put a gentle hand on the arm of Finn’s which was holding on for dear life to this dying spaceship, he forced himself to smile at the other man.

“You doing alright?” Poe asked, voice low enough so the other fighters in the cargo bay couldn’t hear him. They were all spaced out, in position to intercept the docking crew at the station. It had been a lonely trip so far, with Poe rushing around to check on everyone between his stints next to the pilot. He was so busy coaching everyone through what they had to do, did he even have time to be worried?
“I’m fine,” Finn said.

His lie must not have the least bit convincing because Poe’s hand on his arm squeezed tightly. At least when he did look into Poe’s eyes he didn’t see any pity. “Hey, I get it,” Poe said. He released Finn’s arm and slid into the space beside him. Their bodies were pressed together from hip to toe: it wasn’t technically a seating area and it definitely wasn’t designed for two. But they fit there together.

Poe gripped his hand right above Finn’s on the handhold and tilted his head to the side so Finn could hear him over the constant wobbly-shuffle of the metal plates. They were all strapped down but the slightest shift in the ship’s equilibrium caused them to make very unsettling noises. “Are you nervous about the mission?”

“A bit,” Finn said, trying to sound like he wasn’t speaking over a fist-sized lump in his throat. He definitely didn’t feel like he had to vomit either. He was just cool and professional like that. “And the ship doesn’t seem safe. Or, you know, airworthy at all.”

Poe nodded, his pupils contracting and dilating within his smoky brown irises when the lights flickered alarmingly around them. “I get that. I’ve been flying in requisitioned heaps for over three decades, did you know that?” He laughed a bit at the look on Finn’s face, which must have shown shock because two decades? How old was Poe?

“How—” Finn started to ask and then shook his head. It probably wasn’t polite to ask someone how old they were. He wasn’t fully up to speed on all of the social mores the Resistance fighters all seemed to follow but he knew that one. “Is that how long you’ve been flying with the Resistance?”

“I’ve been flying since I was six. My mother was a rebel pilot, I don’t think I ever told you. She showed me firsthand how to hold the throttle.” Poe smiled, but it was a sad smile. “I used to sit on her lap. She was a really good pilot.”

Finn swallowed against the lump in his throat. This story obviously didn’t end well. “What happened to her?”

Poe shrugged. The motion of the ship bumped his shoulder against Finn’s as it shook them back and forth in another bolt-shaking rattle. “She died when I was eight. My dad and another Rebel pilot helped raise me and they taught me everything they knew too. Hey, it happens. It was a long time ago.”

“Yeah, but that’s still sad,” Finn said. “I never knew my parents and it still makes me sad sometimes.”

Very cool move, talking about your feelings. Nice one, Finn. He caught Poe giving him a strange look and cleared his throat. “I mean, I’m fine. Totally fine. The First Order just always has new ships, that’s probably all that’s worrying me.”

Poe made a noncommittal sound. “I’m sure we’ll be fine. Especially with you here to help us out.”

He only had to survive hours more of flying aboard the creaky vessel, the hijacking of a First Order freighter and then the infiltration of a terrifying, moon-sized death trap. Sure. He’d be totally fine. Sure.

Poe must have seen the look on Finn’s face but against all reasonable expectations, the pilot laughed. Finn wanted to be mad but the sound warmed him to the point that he actually chuckled too.
“Poe?” One of the two girls popped up from around the doorframe. “Bastian says we are a minute out.”

“Thanks Jessika,” Poe said. They both sobered up. “You ready? We’ll be up in a few.”

Finn looked at the inside of his helmet. He had once sworn that he would never wear it again. Here he was, about to put it on and about to tromp onto a First Order Death Star. “As ready as I can be,” he said and put the helmet on. “How do I look?”

Poe opened his mouth as if to say something and then closed it tight. Did he look so horrifying that he was basically torturing the unshakable Poe Dameron by forcing him to look at him?

“That bad, huh?”

Poe’s adam’s apple bobbed. The ship shook, hard enough to cause the pilot to stumble. Finn reached for him out of instinct. He caught Poe’s side as the man grabbed his shoulder to steady himself. Finn could see an elevated heart rate through his helmet readouts and he could feel Poe’s breathing catch through the ultra thin gloves of the uniform. “Sorry,” Finn said lamely. He stepped back, releasing Poe quickly. The thermal reading on Poe was skyrocketing: Finn wasn’t sure if that was from embarrassment or something else. He’d never known Poe to ever be really ashamed of anything though. Was that just how badly touching Finn made him feel?

“K2350 please state your intentions. This is a no fly zone for unauthorized vessels.”

The voice over the intercoms came like an electric shock. Finn had to grip the handhold with both hands to steady himself.

“I’m going to check on Bas,” Poe said. Finn tried to smile but realized Poe couldn’t see his expression at all through the Stormtrooper helmet.

“Yeah, good,” he finally said, to Poe’s retreating back. “See you when we land.”

Cool, calm, collected. Yeah right.

Poe

Poe stepped into the cockpit. The ship was moving much more smoothly through the now-frictionless space so he didn’t need to monkey from hand-hold to hand-hold. “What’s our status?” he asked Bastian, their volunteer pilot. He’d flown numerous times with the man, and knew that he was definitely one of the most steady-handed men Poe knew. He could be trusted to keep calm in a crisis.

“I just gave them the code we procured so we’ll see if they accept it,” Bastian said. His voice was like low gravel crunching at the bottom of a stream. It helped remind Poe that he needed to keep a level head as well.

“Good,” Poe said. He slipped into the copilot’s chair and put on the headset. The transmissions were being broadcasted throughout the ship but to answer them you needed a microphone. He had to be prepared in case something were to happen to Bas.

“K2350 it appears as though you are carrying aluminum alloy and copper combinate, can you
Bas pressed the transmission button on his headset. “Affirmative,” he said.

There was silence for a brief moment and then through the static: “K2350 you are clear to approach. Enter the hangar bay and prepare for inspection.”

“Copy that,” Bas said, and guided them in.

“I want you to stay at the helm,” Poe said. “If something happens, you get the hell out of dodge, you hear me Bas? You’re too valuable to get captured here.”

“I’m not leaving you all to die on this ship,” Bas protested, but Poe held up a hand.

“We’re down to the wire in terms of trained pilots, Bas. I have to go to be ready to fly whatever we can find but you’re one of the best pilots I know. We need you to train future recruits if we can’t make it out of this one. We need you now more than ever.”

Bas ground his teeth together audibly but nodded. “Yes sir.”

“If something goes really astray I’ll have Wright up here with a code red. That means you close the loading doors and fly as far away from here as quickly as you can.”

“Can this ship track us through lightspeed, sir?” Bas asked.

“Assume they can,” Poe said. “Get to one of the planets where we have spare ships tucked away in and ditch this overweight junk heap if you have to so that you can all scatter.”

“Good luck out there,” Bas said.

“You too, Bas,” Poe said back. He had to get to the cargo bay so he could be ready to assist in the takedown of the inspection crew. He had an old but functional lading tablet at hand which he grabbed from its storage spot along with a dusty old bandana that he wrapped around his face. He wasn’t sure how well trained the inspectors would be, and whether or not they would recognize him. He was probably on the First Order’s Most Wanted list by now.

He spotted Finn, crouched behind a stack of metal sheeting and gave him a quick wave before the freighter clunked its way into a descent. The lights flickered three times, some loose bulbs swaying overhead, as the freighter came to a groaning landing. For a ship this big and unwieldy, Bastian had sure done a good job of landing it.

Now came the hard part. He had to get the inspection crew far enough in for his group of rebels to incapacitate them without anyone on the larger ship noticing.

The bay door creaked open. The hydraulics clearly needed a tuning and there were probably some gears that had never been greased in their lives. A ship could save you or end your life: you had to take care of them properly. Not the thing to be focusing on at the moment, but hey: Poe could sometimes be easily distracted.

He leaned on a crate and shielded his eyes against the bright light flooding the freighter bay. The telltale clunk of boots told him there was at least one Stormtrooper and one regulation officer. Two uniforms to choose from… that was good. “Well howdy,” he said, drawing his vowels out as best as he could. “Y’all the ones coming to inspect my load?”

His eyes adjusted to the light and he saw two Stormtroopers take up a practiced stance; their
blasters pointed down and their hands were relaxedly tucked around the guns. As calm as they looked, Poe knew that they could and would shoot you without a moment’s hesitation. The officer, a tall woman with cold eyes looked Poe up and down like he might be a piece of trash she’d tried to discard the day before which had somehow crawled out of the garbage and back onto her pristine desk.

Let her look all she wanted. He gave her a once over with his eyes, trying to look like he was leering at her. “You can just give me a signature and I’ll be gladly on my way,” Poe said, holding out the tablet to her like he might be trying to rush her off the ship.

“I will do no such thing,” the woman said. She had blonde hair pulled into a tight bun and manicured fingernails. “Guards, inspect the ship.”

Poe shrugged. “Suit yourselves,” he said.

The lady sniffed. “We will,” she said, not even twitching as the Stormtroopers brushed past her to run amok through his ship. “I am loathe to assume that you have the proper paperwork for this delivery?”

Poe shrugged, pushing himself off the crate. He slouched his way over to her, tablet in hand. When he handed it off to her he put his hands in his pockets and spat off to the side.

The lady looked horrified and disgusted like she might contract a disease from the tablet. “Low life scum,” she muttered to herself, clearly not caring whether he could hear her or not. Class act, these upper-level First Order sorts.

She read over the various pages in the freighter’s tablet, tapped the screen a few times and sniffed twice. Finally, she held the tablet out with two fingers, clearly trying to distance herself from the dirty thing. “This paperwork appears to be in order but I will have to count the items myself,” she said.

“Ma’am,” Poe said and bowed slightly. The woman rolled her eyes and stomped into the depths of the freighter. He hadn’t heard a commotion from the Stormtroopers but he had also been trying to hum and make as many distracting noises as he could by shuffling his feet around and tapping his fingers on the sheets of metal. He waited a handful of seconds and then followed the woman into the ship.

Around the corner from the cargo bay lay three bodies. His crew of fighters were deftly stripping them of their uniforms. They had probably used a combination of knockout gas and swift punches to the head. “They all alive?” Poe asked in a low voice.

“Yes sir,” Pava said, eyeing the taller woman’s uniform.

“Good,” Poe said. “Bring them back to base and let the General question them. That one might actually have some useful information,” he said, pointing to the woman.

He surveyed the uniforms and nodded. “Finn, you and Niv go get some more uniforms on in here. Say you got a request from—” he squinted at the nametag on the woman’s breast, “—Lieutenant Blight to get some assistance with the inspection process. Wright, you take the other outfit. You have the same hair colour so you might be able to pass as her from afar.”

Finn, already in his suit, grabbed the two blasters from the floor and straightened up. Niv had stripped down to his underwear and was pulling on the Stormtrooper suit as quickly as he could. Wright took the pile of clothes and walked off into the ship. She must not have felt as comfortable
as Niv stripping down in front of a crowd. Poe could appreciate that. He helped the others haul the three bodies into the crew’s quarters, where they tied them up and strapped them onto bunks. Behind the thick steel doors nobody would have been able to hear them if they talked or screamed anyway so there was no need to gag their prisoners.

When the second round of Stormtroopers clomped onto the ship, Poe and his crew were able to pick them off one by one.

He surveyed his team once they were all suited up in the eerie white uniforms. “Okay, here’s what’s going to happen,” he said, in a hushed voice. They weren’t right by the outer doors of the ship but it was best not to broadcast the plan too loudly or someone might get suspicious. “Two of you are going to stay behind on the freighter. Pull the same shit at the second location, but instead of sending the ship away I want you to get the Troopers to unload the ship for you so you can send Bastian away with an empty load.

“The rest of you are going to come with me. We’ll say that the ship failed inspection and needs to be sent back. Wright will come with us and hopefully nobody will be able to look too closely at her. We’ll go over to the west side of the hangar because Finn said he saw one of the transporters we’re after. Once we have that, Wright will board with us and one of you will tell them we’re following the freighter because it seemed suspicious. Two of us will stay behind and check out this Death Star and the rest of us will be off to the other eight locations. Are we all clear?”

Everyone nodded and Poe gave them all a grim smile. “Let’s get these bastards,” he said and put on his helmet.

It was a good plan. Poe reflected on the hours of brainstorming it had taken to come up with it and felt a bit of satisfaction among the bundle of nerves. He had contingencies planned of course, in case things went awry.

As we all well know, you can’t plan for everything. The best laid plans… well.

Poe reflected on that as he scrubbed his fiftieth grimy heating coil. Things had been going so well: they had all made it off the freighter, they had sent it away and they’d even managed to mask Wright from scrutinizing view for the most part.

But of course, a large, shiny bronze Stormtrooper with a mean look about its mask stopped Poe in his tracks. Talk about awry. “FN-3310,” Captain Bronze had said, and Poe’s heart had dropped into the pit of his stomach.

He focused on three things: his salute, the way he was holding his blaster, and on not vomiting at the surge in his stomach caused by this sudden derailment of their nice little plot. He could see, behind Captain Bronze, that the rest of his group had faltered but carried on their orderly marching. They really looked like Stormtroopers and Poe couldn’t be more proud of them.

And he couldn’t feel more sick than he did in that moment, he was sure. He saw one of the Troopers look back at him but the procession carried them out of his vision in seconds and then suddenly he was surrounded by Stormtroopers who all looked alike. God damn, he was fucking screwed here, wasn’t he?

Poe swallowed hard and said, with his snappy salute: “Yes, sir.” Finn had drilled many things into them over the past several days. Memorizing the number printed inside the helmets had been the most important thing, followed closely by the second which was proper Stormtrooper etiquette.

“You were absent this morning when summoned to sanitation. Care to comment on why that is?”
Captain Bronze was probably giving him a dirty look right about now and Poe couldn’t blame them one bit.

“Er,” Poe said. “Sorry, sir. I… overslept.” Leave it to Poe to pick the one uniform belonging to a lazy Stormtrooper. Was this an acceptable excuse for a Stormtrooper to give to their commanding officer? He was still frozen in his salute, almost like someone had shot him with a freeze ray.

“That sounds like an excuse, FN-3310.”

“No sir, sorry, sir,” Poe stammered. “I merely... am confessing... to my– my crime.”

Hopefully Captain Bronze would ask him to report to someone somewhere and he could escape, but no, of course Poe’s luck couldn’t support such an outcome. Captain Bronze jerked their head in a sideways motion and said: “Follow me, FN-3310.”

They marched off and Poe reluctantly followed. A few other Stormtroopers might have been looking their way… he couldn’t exactly understand the helmet’s readings. Finn had mentioned something about a way to configure what he saw overlaid on his vision but he couldn’t quite remember. Was there a dial? Or a button on his chest plate?

“Are you paying attention, FN-3310?”

Oops. “Yes sir,” Poe said, hoping he wasn’t digging himself into an even bigger shithole.

“Good,” Captain Bronze snapped. “Is there something wrong with your chest controls?”

“No, no,” Poe said, moving his hands back down to his blaster. He had been trying to surreptitiously press a button. “I just…you know, I thought I saw a bug? Guess I should have shown up to sanitation this morning after all.”

He winced. Maybe Finn should have given them all some training on how to keep calm in front of nosy strangers because today Poe was not succeeding in that department.

Captain Bronze didn’t say anything for a moment or two as they navigated through the twists and turns. Finally, they came to a halt: Poe at least didn’t run bodily into the shiny-suited Trooper like he had with Finn the other day. He stopped at a respectable distance and tried to peer around the metallic suit.

“Here we are, FN-3310. Your afternoon labours. Please see to it that each heating coil is diligently scrubbed clean of grease. We wouldn’t want to have anything compromising the safety of our newest star destroyer, would we? And we especially wouldn’t want it to have been your fault, now do we?”

“No,” Poe said. “We would not.”

Captain Bronze pivoted on their heel to face him. Wasn’t agreeing with them what he was supposed to be doing…?

“Is that insubordination, FN-3310?”

“No, I–”

“Because I would hate to write you up for insubordination as well as tardiness,” Captain Bronze said. They were at least a foot taller than Poe and he couldn’t quite figure out how they got humanoid figures that were that consistently tall to be in these crazy metal suits. It was a good
intimidation tactic to be sure, having some big, shiny person towering over you. Unfortunately for Captain Bronze, Poe didn’t feel like bowing under the heel of the First Order today.

Unfortunately for Poe, he didn’t have much of a choice in the matter.

“Is something the matter, Captain Redding?” came the voice of someone Poe knew all too well. Shit.

“General Hux,” Captain Bronze said, snapping to attention. To his dismay, Poe found himself saluting the slimy red headed bastard at the same time.

The pale-faced man gave Poe a grimace-faced once over like he was looking at a banana peel that had gone all crusty in the garbage bin. “I paged you over an hour ago, Captain Redding. Is this coil cleaning so important that you see fit to neglect your duties to the greater good of our cause?”

Oh, how badly Poe wanted to shoot him. His right arm was shaking where it held the blaster to him. He would only be replaced with someone worse, Poe was sure, but boy would it be satisfying. This man who had ordered the deaths of so many he probably couldn’t even count them. Here he was, standing two feet away.

“No, General Hux,” Captain Bronze said. They almost sounded nervous.

Hux’s nose wrinkled as he gave the pair of them a disdainful sniff. “Have your cleaning boy tend to my quarters next,” he said. He turned on his heel and stalked off, hands clutched behind his back in an extremely douchey manner. He obviously expected the bronze Stormtrooper to follow immediately, which they did.

Poe’s right eye twitched.

“I will be watching you on my location radar,” came a page through Poe’s helmet. “If you so much as leave before I’m sure you’ve cleaned every coil in this room, you will experience a punishment you cannot even imagine.”

Yep. He was without a doubt imperially screwed.

__Finn__

Finn looked over his shoulder at the shiny bronze Stormtrooper. It was possible that they had promoted a Stormtrooper to Captain Phasma’s position after their fight. He was reasonably certain that the previous holder of the post would not be returning to duties any time soon if ever. He’d seen the look in her eyes before she had plummeted into the crevasse. She had seen her own impending doom as well.

Of course, he’d seen people survive stranger things. But for now he thought it would be safe to assume that the bronze-plated Stormtrooper was the Captain of this Death Star’s troops. That meant they would have access to tracking information about their subordinates.

Okay. New plan. Finn nudged Niv and motioned for him to alert the others close to him. He made a ‘follow me’ gesture with his head and steered the group out of the loading bay altogether. If they were building this base like they lazily built all of their ships, there should be a small room to the top right of the loading bay. They went down two hallways before he found it, right where he’d
thought it would be.

There was no code to enter the room since it would presumably be a cargo hold for nonessentials. Finn’s heart was pounding in his head but when he pressed the button to open the door, it slid open like magic. The fighters all piled in and thankfully, one scoped out the room as the others waited for the door to close behind them before they started talking.

“Shit!” Jessika swore.

“Was that Poe?” whispered Niv. Through the helmet’s voice changing mechanism his voice was still awfully loud.

“We’re fucked!” Jessika said again.

“Not necessarily,” Wright said, tugging at her Lieutenant’s cap. “We just need a new plan.”

“The new plan is the old plan,” Finn said. “At least, it should be.”

The Resistance fighters paused in their communal panic to turn to him. Normally he wouldn’t have seniority over this group of people but this was his element. “Listen, you guys. I know I’m kind of new to this group but so are a few of you. We can just improvise the parts of the plan that no longer work. First things first though, you all have tracking mechanisms in your helmets. That shouldn’t be an issue because you’re all going to be leaving this ship and their range isn’t worth shit. It’ll be moot once you’re out of the Death Star’s orbit.”

“What about Poe? They have one on him? Why didn’t we disable those motherfucking things before we put these goddamn death traps on?” Theo Meltsa asked.

“You can’t disable the tracker from within the suit and still have it be remotely functional,” Finn said. “Now I don’t have any tracking on my helmet and I also know how to erase someone from the shipwide manifest, so I am Poe’s best chance. If I stay behind with him, we can take care of this Death Star. The rest of you go in your pairs to the other locations as planned. We just won’t have Poe with us to fly but you were all chosen for your skills as pilots. I’m sure that you’ll be fine without him. I vote that off the ship you have Jessika be your number one in charge so someone has a deciding vote on how things will be carried out.”

“Seconded,” Niv agreed quickly.

“Thirded,” Wright said.

“Okay, fuck! Not much else we can do. I accept,” Jessika said. “And you’re sure you’ll be fine here?”

Was he sure of anything these days? His life had taken some very unexpected turns recently. He sometimes felt like the proverbial rug had been pulled out from under him. From his friend dying in front of him on a strange planet where they were ordered to slaughter women and children to the sight of Poe strapped to the chair in Kylo Ren’s makeshift torture chamber. The man had been bleeding, battered and bruised but he had stuck to his ideals and done all he could to protect the innocent peoples of the world.

And he had always done everything he could to make sure Finn was safe and clothed. And loved. Yes. He was sure that he had amazing friends he didn’t want to lose. That had to be enough. “Yes. I’m sure,” he said.

“Okay,” Jessika said. “Then as leader I order you to take care of Poe and this Death Star.
Remember, this mission is reconnaissance only unless the ship’s systems cannot be destroyed from the outside. If you need to stay behind you have to send us a message somehow.”

There was no way that anyone could build a perfect ship. But sometimes the First Order’s shields could be impenetrable, even to transmissions. “Copy that,” he said.

“May the Force be with you Finn,” Jessika said. She gathered the rest of them and they filed out, back into the den of monsters.

The Force wasn’t going to help him find Poe in this death trap but he knew what would: a good old fashioned terminal hack. And by hack he meant using the test login for when something went amiss with the system. He hadn’t been the Perfect Stormtrooper… he hadn’t even been that Great of a Stormtrooper. He reflected on his time with the First Order as he undid the bolts on the ventilation shaft inside the cargo hold. There were two types of ventilation onboard a First Order vessel: one that carried air and heat and one that was used exclusively to service and maintain the air and heating ducts. This area was generally very perilous: there were no typical floors, just handholds on the inner hull of the starship. But this area was also generally very empty because of the aforementioned peril.

Finn was counting on that as he slung his blaster onto his back and made his way across the ship. He was sweating by the time he counted enough rungs to be well past the cargo bay. His forearms were aching by the time he thought he had counted his way over to a room that would have a terminal in it. And by the time the engineers in that room had cleared out, Finn’s hands were going numb from the cold and from gripping the rungs so tightly.

Normally when you were dispatched to maintain the air ducts you had a special harness that allowed you to be safely suspended for as long as you needed to be down there. Since he was technically a stowaway, he had none of the above. He groaned his way out of the duct when he finally got it open and allowed himself a brief moment on the floor for self pity.

Then he had to get up because Poe’s life was in his numb, aching hands.

He put the duct back in place with two screws and transferred his attention to the terminal. He flexed his fingers and typed with his two indexes: tstusr. When he hit the next button, he was greeted with the password screen. Okay so if they hadn’t changed the username then had they changed their password?

Finn typed carefully, making sure not to hit any wrong keys with his clumsy Stormtrooper fingers. Enter, and...

Yep. It was still password.

What a lazy bunch of closed-minded people the First Order were.

Finn had no time to pat himself on the back. The next shift of engineers had to be on their way. He only had a few moments to locate Poe, currently designated as FN-3310. Poe was in some crappy little room on the 40th level. What was he even doing there? Oh well. Finn quickly typed in the code to tell the system that Poe was, in fact, now a stationary dot on the 40th level. He also took a minute to see if he could find a ship to get them out of there (he did) and any schematics or plans on the ship (also miraculously in there). He put in the order to hold the ship for them, downloaded the all-important schematics to his helmet’s storage drive and then closed all of his windows and logged out. Hopefully nobody would notice what he had done and they would all carry on with their work like normal.
And both the computers and Captain Redding would believe that Poe wasn’t moving.

The problem with his very clever scheme, Finn thought to himself as he stared into the empty little room on the 40th level, was that he now had no way of tracking Poe. His helmet wasn’t integrated with this ship’s systems so he couldn’t even hack in again and look it up on the go.

“Hey, you there,” a Stormtrooper called from behind him.

Finn was sweaty and upset at having lost his friend. He turned around and tightened his hands around his blaster. He was in no mood to be fucked with by a random lackey.

“What?” he asked, maybe a bit too rudely. Oh well. These could have been his former brothers if he had stayed with the First Order. But if they were all heartless murderers then he really didn’t need to have anything much to do with them, did he? So he didn’t need to feel too guilty either. If they wanted to defect they could at least show some sign of it.

“Are you looking for FN-3310?”

The question brought Finn up short. He gaped, open-mouthed but couldn’t quite find any words to say. Good thing the Stormtrooper

The other Trooper shuffled over to him. “You heard how he’s doing everyone’s chores today too, huh? I don’t know what’s up with the guy but if he wants to take my sanitation duties, I’m not going to complain about it.”

Finn blinked. How on earth had Poe Dameron, extremely famous X-Wing pilot of the Resistance, managed to make himself an extremely famous toilet scrubber onboard the galaxy’s first Death Star in over twenty years? Within minutes of landing?

“Yeah,” Finn said. “Exactly what you just said.”

“Last I heard he was up in the TN quarters and they were getting him to mop their floors. You’d better hurry if you need something done… this stroke of good luck can’t last forever!”

“You know it,” Finn said, and then the Stormtrooper left. Just like that.

Maybe Finn had been good in a previous life and was currently getting rewarded for it? He tromped his way to a freight elevator which was miraculously empty. It felt like it might be his lucky day until a small group of Stormtroopers signaled for him to hold the door. His reflex was to stick his arm out and make sure the doors didn’t close, which he cursed himself for a moment later when none other than General Hux himself preceded his accompanying guards into the elevator.

The man didn’t acknowledge Finn at all, not even to thank him for halting the elevator’s progress on his behalf. That was the real issue with the First Order: they didn’t seem to care much for human lives, whether they were under their command or not. Anyone born into poverty was lucky if they were allowed to scrape by and stay alive until the First Order turned a Death Star cannon at their planet to “save them from their own misery”, or at least that was what Finn had been told for years.

Finn’s jaw clenched and he tried, oh he tried not to grind his teeth. He must not have been successful because General Hux shot him a dirty glare before the elevator dinged. Thirtieth floor. The General stiffened his shoulders and tilted his chin up when the doors slid open and he marched off, followed closely by his Stormtroopers.

Finn ended up having to hold his breath until the doors closed and then he collapsed against the
That had been too close for comfort. He had to find Poe and get out of this death trap of a starship.

Poe

Poe slopped the dirty mop into the bucket of water with finality. He was done, done!! No more floor cleaning today.

He was in the living quarters for some quadrant of Stormtroopers who had intercepted him on his way out of General Hux’s rooms. He had expected Captain Bronze to be waiting for him but maybe they had tired of torturing him. Unfortunately, the rest of the Death Star’s expansive crew seemed to only be getting started.

He had been led from room to room with his new best friend the mop. His stomach was growling and his back ached. It wasn’t that he wasn’t used to hard work: the sanitation duties on the Resistance base were on a rotatory schedule. If you somehow managed to weasel out of them by being called to fly a scouting mission just when your toilet plunging duties started, you made them up the following week with twice as much work.

So he had cleaned his fair share of bathrooms, alright? But the stiffness of the Stormtrooper uniform combined with the many hours of heavy lifting (someone had ordered him to carry their goods from one room to another and they had shockingly heavy boxes), followed by the absolutely endless mopping, well. He wasn’t getting any younger and his back was just dying to remind him of that.

Poe dumped the mop contents down the drain in a communal bathroom across the hall from the living quarters and stowed his tools in the small maintenance closet. There. He was finished. If he could get into a room that he could hide in for a few hours, maybe he could figure out who if anyone had stayed back for him. And if nobody had stayed then he’d have to find an escape route on his own.

He slid the maintenance door shut and ducked into the living quarters to be out of the hallway. He needed a moment to himself: all day he had been spotted by Stormtroopers, then followed by them, watched and bothered and surrounded by them.

Poe wasn’t a very private person: he was loud and outgoing and brash. He generally preferred being around the noise of the Resistance Fighters to the silence in his own head. Hell, when he was in Black One he was never really alone either. He always had BB-8 or other pilots talking in his ears. But he had always had a choice in those situations. He could always turn off the microphone, leave the crowd or find peace and quiet in his private room.

Here there was no privacy. Poe had witnessed that first hand. He’d known that Finn was jumpy and uncomfortable in the Resistance settings some of the time and here was the reason for it. Stormtroopers slept in rooms with at least four bunks. Some of the ones he’d cleaned today had held eight or more! He knew because he had counted each one when he had mopped under them.

The bathrooms were devoid of any privacy as well, at least the male ones he had been allowed into. They were nothing more than open urinals, a few closed stalls that stood in the centre of the room with no more separation than a few flimsy half walls of metal. Poe had been forced to use a stall when in a moment of sheer desperation he had forgotten where the button was to release the
dreaded crotch piece and had needed the slight shielding to maintain his cover.

There were showers too, which Poe hadn’t used. They were big open rooms with many shower heads and drains in the floor. The stark colours and lack of decorations anywhere were all very unsettling, too.

Poe took off his helmet and ran a gloved hand through his sweaty hair. He knew it was essentially useless to put any amount of effort into styling when he was going to be wearing a helmet all day but he wasn’t an animal. He was, however, a man with no plan and incredibly curly hair that wasn’t going to get any less crazy anytime soon.

He spotted something at the head of one of the beds that he had missed during his mopping. The rooms had started to blend together after the first two: it had been difficult to focus on the mission at hand, which was learning as much about this Death Star as they possibly could during their brief stint aboard the vessel. Tucked almost completely under the pillow was a small bit of dark plastic. Poe was just about to investigate when the door of the room slid open.

He froze in place, his heart thudding a throbbing anthem in his throat. He hadn’t a second more to act before the Stormtrooper who had entered the room was upon him. They quickly entered his personal bubble and forced him back a step. Poe was unwilling to give up any more ground if he could help it though. He stopped and straightened his aching back as best as he could.

The Stormtrooper stopped and tilted their head. “You’re not supposed to remove your helmet,” they said.

Poe breathed in deep, eyes fixed on the dark triangles that marked the eye screens. He jutted his chin out and tilted his head up like he had seen Captain Bronze do. “We have always been permitted to remove helmets in bathrooms, our own quarters and for meals.”

The Stormtrooper was silent for a beat and then they shook their head. “This is too weird.”

What?

“What?” Poe asked. He had never heard a Stormtrooper talk like that.

Just then the Trooper put their hand out so it just barely grazed Poe’s chest plate. He stared at the glove’s motion, thoroughly baffled. The other Stormtrooper went back towards the door and, putting his hand on the smooth surface, actually slid the door open a fraction.

Poe opened his mouth to ask what the hell was going on when the Stormtrooper cursed out an actual swear word, slid the door shut, pressed a button beside the door and proceeded to shove Poe towards the back of the room.

“What the hell is going on, would you stop that?” Poe asked, ineffectually trying to slap away the other Stormtrooper where they had grabbed hold of him. It was like pushing against a brick wall. These guys really worked out. Poe stumbled backwards, trying to keep his footing on the slippery floor. The Trooper pushed at a section of the wall which miraculously opened like it too was a door. A door made from a hidden piece of the wall!? What the fuck was happening?

Poe looked into the newly revealed closet and then looked back at the other Stormtrooper, mouth gaping with disbelief. “What are you –” he started to say and had to back up quickly as the Stormtrooper walked towards him. The only way he could go was into the closet which was not fucking big enough for two grown men to stand in. “We won't fit –” he protested, voice cut off
from audibility when the Stormtrooper clapped a gloved hand over his mouth and closed them in.

Finn

It was a tight squeeze, that was for sure. Finn was grateful that either nobody had discovered this supply closet or they simply didn’t have enough personal effects to make use of it because the tiny space was blessedly empty at least.

The last time he had been forced to hide in a closet had been ten years ago and Finn was a lot bigger than he had been back then. Poe wasn’t small either: he was maybe a few inches shorter than Finn, but he obviously kept to a training schedule like the rest of the Resistance fighters because he was fairly well built as well.

Poe tried to say something again, voice coming out muffled beneath Finn’s hand. Why he was insisting on making so much goddamn noise, Finn couldn’t tell but he didn’t have time to explain. They were about to have company so he squeezed his hand more tightly over the pilot’s mouth. He had just enough room to maneuver himself to pull off his helmet if he put his elbow up beside Poe’s head and he was sure he would need to use his own ears to be able to hear outside of the closet.

He had to push himself against Poe, wiggling a bit to get his arm free, but after sliding his one leg between Poe’s he had just enough leverage and space with which to remove his helmet.

He missed the eyescreens instantly: the light was unfortunately dim in this closet. Before he had been able to see every detail on Poe’s face in vivid green-and-black. Even though visibility was low, he couldn’t miss the way Poe’s eyes widened like twin moons when his face was revealed. He felt momentarily guilty that he hadn’t properly announced himself and realized that had probably been the reason for Poe’s reticence to be bundled into the closet.

“Shh,” he hissed at Poe and pressed his ear to the wall that had briefly acted as a door. It put his face so close to Poe’s that he could almost hear the other man’s heart beating. Luckily, the noises coming through the wall were loud enough that he could make them out.

“Wow, Thirty really did a good job in here.”

“Too bad he’s not in a cleaning mood more often.”

“One time he made my bed for me.”

There were some shuffling noises that Finn recognized as Stormtroopers divesting themselves of helmets and boots. It sounded like there were two of them which made sense: they usually travelled in pairs. It was safer both for the Stormtroopers and for the First Order: there was always someone to keep track of your every movement, which the Order liked and there was always someone to watch your back which the Troopers liked. It really gave you a false sense of security, which could become quite an obvious flaw when you went on a raid and suddenly enemies came at you from every angle and improvised wildly in a way Stormtroopers often didn’t and couldn’t train for.

They must have been settling down for bed which Finn couldn’t quite understand. Had he lost track of too much time? He could have sworn that it was just after breakfast when they would have landed, which should have placed them right in the midst of a shift change. It was the least likely
time for the Resistance fighters to get caught, or so Fin had thought.

Poe made a strange noise from behind Finn’s hand and shifted beneath where Finn had him pinned against the wall. This resulted in a soft, plastoidy scrape. Finn removed the hand from Poe’s mouth and shot him a glare. They were maybe an inch apart in the small, dark space. The Stormtroopers were still chatting about their day, mostly harmless gossip which Finn hoped was covering the extreme amounts of noise that Poe was making. The man wouldn’t stop wiggling.

“Shh,” Finn repeated, looking into Poe’s wide, brown eyes. His own eyes had almost fully adjusted to the lighting change and he could see that the pilot’s skin was flushed and beaded with sweat, his hair slick and curling away from his forehead. His breathing was also ragged: by all appearances Poe Dameron was a man who had just run a grueling ten kilometer race.

What was wrong with him?

Poe reached up to Finn’s chest and pushed insistently. He had been pushing himself up in his tippy toes, like he was trying to get away from…

And then Finn felt it. He had been so preoccupied on eavesdropping, on keeping them from being discovered that he had declined to pay attention to Poe. This was of course a man who was not used to being in close quarters to other men in full Stormtrooper uniform. Finn twisted away from Poe as best as he could, trying to move his leg so it wasn’t pressing so...intimately against Poe’s… intimate bits.

Sorry, Finn tried to say with his eyes, as Poe’s muffled groaning and shuffling finally stopped.

Poe met Finn’s gaze with eyes that were all pupil. His tongue darted out to wet his lips, and Finn’s mind drifted from their task at hand. What a terribly compromised position he had put them both in. With Poe backed up against a wall and Finn’s hands basically trapping him there…

What happened next almost felt like an electrical short. Finn’s mind flashed to an image of Poe, spread out on a bed wearing what he’d glimpsed of the man when he had been changing into the uniform. Finn had looked away but clearly not in time as his traitorous mind dredged up the memory in excruciating detail on its own. Poe was an attractive man and he was older than Finn which meant he definitely had a lot more experience.

That thought made Finn’s insides clench: the sudden possessive urge to keep Poe all to himself was overwhelming. Finn hadn’t had any experience although he had heard stories of the other Troopers experimenting with one another. He had never been close enough to any of them to do anything more than try things on his own.

Here, in this moment, Finn wanted Poe all to himself. He knew that whenever the pilot saw him his face lit up like the sun had just risen. He also knew that the first thing he did upon entering a room was always to look for Poe. Poe was like his constant: he was a large part of the reason Finn had defected from the First Order in the first place. That and Finn didn’t want to kill innocent people just because he had been ordered to. But really, Poe always made sure Finn had a choice in things, so that he could educate himself and decide what course of action to take. Whether it lined up with the Resistance’s wishes or not.

And Poe’s lips were so close right now that Finn could practically taste them. He could smell everything: the sweet almost minty breath puffing in and out of Poe’s mouth, the deep, woody soap that Poe must wash with rising in waves from him as he sweated under the Stormtrooper uniform. It was funny; Finn had been around a lot of men in his life and most of them had the distinctive tang of sweat after a few hours of work. Poe somehow always managed to defy logic and smell
good, even after jumping straight out of a cockpit.

Finn looked back into Poe’s eyes only to see the pilot’s eyes flicking down at his lips. Did this mean something? Should Finn be leaning in like he was, trying to reach past the stiff plastic separating them to make contact?

He swallowed his mouthful of saliva that seemed to be multiplying at an alarming rate. This must be how Poe felt as well because Finn saw the man’s adam’s apple bob in a distinctive swallow. Poe too seemed to be leaning forward and Finn decided to take the initiative for a second. He would just try something out and apologize for the action later if Poe didn’t like it.

Their lips met. Poe’s stiffened momentarily but then he relaxed beneath Finn and his lips were so soft that Finn had to concentrate on his own lips. Was he tensing up out of fear? Was Poe enjoying the kiss as much as Finn was? Was it just Finn or were Poe’s shoulders made of jelly too? It felt like all of the blood had drained from Finn’s upper body, like his heart was pounding an erratic staccato and something was happening between his legs. He had to shift and when the scrape of plastic was accompanied by the slide of the door to the Stormtrooper’s quarters, he froze.

Poe froze too, their lips parting and had that been an hour or only seconds?

Finn swallowed hard and forced himself to press his ear to the door again. It sounded like Stormtroopers suiting up and leaving but he couldn’t really be sure without checking. The exterior door slid again, possibly shutting itself behind their enemies.

Finn was breathing hard now too, and when he looked at Poe it was all he could do to clear his throat and not lean back in. “I think they might be gone,” he whispered.

Poe didn’t say anything. Was he disappointed that Finn was such a bad kisser? He hadn’t ever done it before so he wasn’t exactly sure what the reaction afterwards should look like but in his wildest dreams it definitely hadn’t been this.

Of course, in these dreams they weren’t on a goddamned Death Star, of all places. They were usually on a nice, quiet planet with not too much sun and not too much shade. Maybe some nice trees, a cozy cottage with a nice, safe bed.

And absolutely no sand.

“Should we check?” Finn asked, desperate for Poe to react, to say something, maybe even to kiss him back.

He knew you weren’t supposed to go around kissing just anyone or even your friends… but had he been imagining the look on Poe’s face, then? Was this one of those times where Finn had misunderstood the moment?

Had he just ruined his friendship with the pilot? He stupidly hadn’t bothered with that train of thought before the kiss. But now the fear struck him like a lightsaber to the chest.

“I don’t hear anything out there now,” Finn said again. He was almost frantic with panic now, eyes searching Poe’s for a sign of anything. They must have been in different headspaces though because now Finn couldn’t understand the look on Poe’s face. Or maybe the pilot was just incredibly unhappy and closed off now.

What a colossal dumbass Finn was.

He nodded like another stupid bobblehead and reached for the door. “Okay. I’m gonna check.”
The door clicked softly when he tugged the inner handle to activate the release mechanism. He waited a moment for a shout of discovery, but when none came he pushed the door all the way open and took a look around the room.

Empty.

Poe

The coast was clear.

Poe’s mind was not.

He heard Finn saying something but couldn’t get his ears to function in listen-only mode. He could only properly comprehend the soft buzz of static at the moment. It seemed to almost be like after a bomb had gone off, where all you could hear was ringing, only the bomb was Finn’s mouth making direct contact with his.

Finn had technically made the first move in this situation. Poe vividly recalled the thigh between his legs pressing tantalizingly along the line of his growing erection, which contrary to his pleading conscious brain had been immediately interested in the contact. It had been—hard to say the least, to keep himself from kissing Finn messily and creating two very uncomfortable Stormtrooper outfits in the process. He had resisted, if only barely, and had at the time thought he probably deserved a medal for not jumping his best friend’s bones in that very instant.

But then Finn had leaned in and kissed him. Him. Poe Dameron, Black Leader, best pilot in the galaxy, who had slept alone for almost a decade. Finn, the only known defector of Stormtrooper brainwashing, had kissed him. And when Poe thought about it, Finn had really chosen him a long time ago: back when he had been captured by Leia’s megalomaniac son.

He hadn’t been sure then if it had been significant that he had been the one caught and rescued. But he sure as hell knew that kiss had been.

The problem was that now, Finn was pulling back. He’d checked the Stormtrooper room again, even opened the door. And was babbling nonsensically about something or other instead of leaning in and kissing him again.

Maybe that was because they were in enemy territory and their lives were at risk, but the dark side of Poe’s mind that loved pity was elbowing its way to the forefront, shouting as loudly as it could that Finn just hadn’t liked the kiss all that much.

Or maybe he just didn’t like Poe.

Poe shook his head and squeezed his eyes shut. First, he had to focus. Getting off on the Death Star was only slightly less appealing than getting off the Death Star and then getting off.

The margins were razor thin but Poe knew what they had to do.

He started wiggling his way towards the front of the closet and of course, it was his luck that they both popped out at the same time. They landed in a decidedly undignified heap, with Finn on top (Jessika would just kill to be here witnessing this unfold).
Finn gaped at Poe and then quickly scrambled to his feet. After a beat, he offered his hand down to Poe who grudgingly took it. He didn’t need help but his sore back clamored suddenly to be remembered.

Finn must have noticed something Poe’s face even though he was trying so hard to hide his discomfort because he looked very concerned and put a hand on Poe’s shoulder. “Are you alright?” he asked.

Poe shook his head. How embarrassing was his tale on a scale of one to ten? “That bronze Captain said they had a tracker on me,” he said. “I didn’t know if I could get away so I just went along with everything. *Everything*, Finn.”

Finn’s eyes briefly raked down Poe’s body, causing Poe’s ears to burn. He punched Finn in the arm to give himself a bit of a machismo boost. “Not like *that*. They had me cleaning bathrooms and mopping and scrubbing coils.”

“Oh,” Finn said, clearly relieved that Poe hadn’t been pressured into any uncomfortable sexual situations which made Poe wonder if Finn had ever been pressured like that. The thought made his blood boil.

“Does that sort of thing, er, happen often?” Poe asked.

Finn shrugged. “I’ve heard of it happening.”

Poe huffed out a breath and rubbed the back of his neck. He suddenly remembered the plastic fragment he’d seen under the one pillow and pointed it out to Finn. “What’s that?”

Finn flushed lightly, almost looking embarrassed. “Probably a piece off an old helmet. We don’t really have time–”

“An old piece of plastoid?” Poe asked. He took out the small black chunk of plastoid and examined it. It had once had sharp edges that now were worn smooth almost like they’d been rubbed over and over.

“I guess,” Finn said, voice soft as his hands clenched and unclenched at his sides. It almost looked like he was about to have a bit of a panic attack. “I guess you might call it a toy?”

“Off an old helmet?” Poe asked.

“Some people keep a little piece,” Finn said, shrugging again. “You get new helmets as your head grows… based on the size I’d say that one came from a first helmet.”

Poe looked down at the little piece of plastoid again and then put it back under the pillow. He’d never pictured Stormtroopers as needing a security blanket, but children taken from their parents so young and then given only one set of clothes to wear for years… it made sense that they would want to keep a memento that might remind them of their former lives. Unfortunately, it also served to remind Poe that the Stormtroopers, like Finn, were all very, very human.

“Okay,” Poe said. “We have to get out of here. Do… did you get anything on this Death Star?” Poe asked. He’d been way too busy to gather information and was vaguely hoping that this question would help to distract both Finn and himself from the awful, humanizing piece of plastoid.

“Yeah, I think so,” Finn said. He looked right into Poe’s eyes, a hint of sadness there. At least Finn wasn’t too embarrassed by their previous kiss to look at him properly. “I mean, I got some data and stored it in my helmet. I also wiped you from the tracking system.”
Poe nodded. Pride warmed the cockles of his heart. Here Finn was, dodging strategically and doing his job while Poe, a master in the cockpit but an absolute disaster with a mop had been faffing about all day. “Good job, buddy,” he said. He held up a helmet. “We’d better put these things on.”


“That’s *my* helmet,” Finn said, and snatched it from Poe’s hand, looking disgustedly at the other man. “Do you have any idea how gross it is to put on someone else’s helmet?”

Poe, who personally had been wearing someone else’s helmet all day, gave him a level stare. Sure, it was probably gross. But what was he supposed to do about it?

“Right,” Finn muttered. “I– I forgot. Sorry. That’s just something they taught us… I already broke through my programming on murdering innocent people, I think I should get a pass on the personal hygiene front. Anyway. This one’s mine.”

*That* made Poe laugh, a short sound that surprised him. What a good, reliable person Finn was. Poe felt extremely lucky to have him around. “I’ll make that a deal if you don’t tell anyone how many bathrooms I had to clean,” he said, putting the helmet that wasn’t Finn’s onto his head. “Twenty, in case you were wondering.”

Finn snorted and put his helmet on too. “If we make it out of here alive the only thing I’ll be telling them is about how we managed it.”

“Do you have a safe way to get down to the cargo bay?” Poe asked.

Finn tapped a finger against his helmet. “I’m way ahead of you on that. I even hacked us a ship earlier. We should be able to walk right up and take it, no questions asked.”

Poe smiled. “I didn’t doubt you for a second.”
You Give Love A Bad Name

Chapter Summary

Pain! Agony! I'm not sorry because I enjoyed writing and reading it both.

Poe

The easy part turned out to be taking the ship out of the cargo bay. The really hard and terrible part was the miles of freezing cold handholds Poe and Finn had to navigate through to get to there. Poe cursed and sweated and slipped and shivered the whole way through. He couldn’t imagine a worse way to travel and wondered at how Finn seemed to not only easily traverse the strange, arid landscape between the outer hull of the ship and the inner rooms, but also that he remembered exactly where to go.

He knew that he had a map in his helmet of where they were on the ship but it was incredibly hard to decipher. Finn, on the other hand, had no map. Just the memory of countless First Order ships and where they kept things. They only peeked into one wrong room on their way and that turned out to be a kitchen with wafting smells that made Poe’s stomach growl so loudly he was sure they were going to get busted.

But they weren’t.

They sped safely away aboard the XI-class light shuttle that Finn had appropriated for them. The sheer relief Poe felt at being in the pilot’s seat gave him a giddy rush of joy. It was a small thing, to be sitting and pushing an imperially-designed throttle forward to slowly float out of the Death Star. Poe almost expected someone to shout and shoot after them, but they made it out with no incidents there either.

“I think there might be tracking on this ship,” Finn said, somewhere behind Poe.

“Tracking through lightspeed?” Poe asked.

Finn made a noncommittal noise as Poe navigated them around the First Order traffic. He had been shocked at first when the ship’s coms had come through his Stormtrooper helmet, crystal clear. It was a bit disconcerting, to not be in his normal fighter pilot helmet, or at least to not be wearing a headset. In his brief examination of the cockpit however, he hadn’t found one.

“Hey, can you look for a headset?” Poe asked.

Finn made another noise: when Poe glanced over his shoulder at the other man he saw him busily typing into one of the computer terminals.

Poe thought for a beat and then removed his helmet. “Finn,” he said.

“Hmm,” Finn answered.

“I’m going to need to jump to lightspeed pretty quickly here,” Poe said. “Should I change our heading?”
“I’m looking,” Finn said, eyes darting busily. Poe scanned quickly and noted the helmet beside Finn on the console. Finn must have taken his helmet off the second he’d sat down. That was definitely a piece of equipment they couldn’t afford to lose. Not if it contained the best kept secrets in the galaxy behind its solemn, black eye screens.

It couldn’t hurt to float for a bit in First Order space, could it? Poe checked his helmet, but sure enough a transmission was coming through. He popped his helmet back on and listened carefully.

“I said, Xi 44-92-010, do you copy?”

“Yes, I copy,” Poe said, belatedly adding a “Sir” to the end.

“You are due at your destination in under twenty minutes. Why have you not made the jump to lightspeed yet?”

So that was a definite yes on the tracking. Poe grimaced. What was he supposed to say? That he was too busy thinking about the First Order tracking down what remained of his loved ones and blasting them to pieces to make a simple light speed jump to his planned coordinates?

“FN-8099 here. Coordinates were entered wrong and produced an error. The issue has been dealt with and we are on our way.”

That was Finn’s voice. Poe frowned. Was it him or was that not Finn’s current fake Stormtrooper number?

“Copy that, Xi 44-92-010. We have received the error on our end. You appear to be clear for light speed travel.”

“Copy that, Command,” the voice that was for sure Finn said. Poe glanced over his shoulder and saw that yes: Finn had found a headset from somewhere. “Jump to lightspeed.”

“Yes sir,” Poe said. He clicked the appropriate switches and pushed the throttle forward until the stars gave way to the tunnel vision of light speed travel.

The lights dashing towards them were hypnotically beautiful as always. Poe let himself soak up the blur of stars and planets for a moment before removing his helmet. He startled at the hand on his shoulder as he turned to ask Finn what the hell was going on. The other man was already at his side, crouched down on the upper level of the cockpit.

“Here,” Finn said, holding out a headset. “I think we’re only going to be traveling for a few minutes. The planet we’re supposed to be going to is quite close.”

Poe closed his eyes momentarily and breathed in deep to center himself. Sometimes you just had to roll with the punches and come up with a plan on the fly. Luckily, flying was what he did best.

“And what planet is that? I don’t see the coordinates on these readouts.”

“You’re not supposed to,” Finn said. “They want disposable troops. Anyone who knows how to fly doesn’t learn how to navigate. The First Order want to be able to kill the navigator or pilot and still be able to get the fuck out of Jakku, if you get my drift. Easier to have two different jobs and if you know less, the less questions you have in general I think is their theory.”

Poe fiddled with the microphone on the headset and shook his head. “How awful.”

Finn’s eyes glanced briefly upwards before he spoke again and in his face Poe saw a silent prayer to whatever deity the First Order let you believe in. “That’s a dictatorship for you.”
“So where are we going?”

“Since they’re tracking us, I set our coordinates to the ones the First Order gave us so they won’t be suspicious when we land there. It’s some crystal planet. Mygeeto?” Finn frowned and scratched under his chin. “We’re supposed to pick up some Nova crystals. Apparently there’s a First Order base there.”

“Mygeeto?” Poe asked. “Are you sure?”

“It was a pretty weird name,” Finn said. “I don’t think I read it wrong.”

Poe tapped his fingers on the throttle. What were the odds? “It used to be a rebel outpost. I remember hearing my parents talk about it. They said Darth Vader went there to destroy it personally. Probably because the crystals can be used as an intergalactic currency to, you know, fund wars and stuff. I wonder if there are any rebel ships left.”

“Darth Vader?” Finn asked. “The Darth Vader.”

“The one and only,” Poe said.

“So what should we do?” Finn asked. “We can’t just go poking around a strange planet looking for rebel ships dressed as Stormtroopers. Wait. Can we?”

“Why not?” Poe asked. “Isn’t that what Stormtroopers do?”

“Usually not without a lieutenant present,” Finn said. He paused. “And usually there’s two to four Stormtroopers for every one lieutenant.”

“You know that,” Poe said. “But what are the odds that everyone else does?” He stretched and stood. By his analysis, it looked like they had a few minutes left yet in their light speed flight and the ship was basically on autopilot. You didn’t need much skill to fly this particular ship and if they were going around and killing all their pilots, Poe could see why.

“I guess,” Finn said. “I should probably stay in my uniform since I have the data.”

“Let’s see if they don’t have any spare outfits on this bad boy then,” Poe said. The ship was deceptively large, with three floors and several rooms. It was a vessel capable of long-range flight that probably took important Sith around the galaxy to murder and loot for weeks at a time.

They found several rooms that obviously belonged to Stormtroopers and after digging through what felt like every closet and drawer they found one with a stiff-collared uniform. “It might even be my size,” Poe said. Uncomfortable with the thought that he had a First Order counterpart out there he tilted his head at Finn and tried to make light of the situation. “But it’s definitely not my colour.”

Finn blinked solemnly at him and Poe shrugged. Well, he had tried.

Finn coughed. “Do you need help with the back piece?”

“I’ve got it,” Poe said, reaching awkwardly around. He twisted, fingers stretching to their limits. He scowled, twisted the other way and fumbled for the catch. He was sure he had it, he could feel the plastic switch under his fingertips, if he could only get a grip.

Finn snorted and Poe let him handle the full brunt of his pointed glare. “Here,” Finn said. He was a lot quicker than Poe had been at depressing the catch but his fingers lingered a second longer than
was strictly necessary to remove the large plastic piece. Poe only had to remove the front piece and then he would be able to step out of the uniform, where he would be left standing in front of Finn in only his underwear.

He unclipped the chest plate and glanced up to see Finn still staring. “Should there be music playing?” he asked.

“Huh?” Finn asked.

Poe gestured down at his torso. “Usually when there’s a strip show going on, there’s music playing.”

Instead of smiling or laughing as if it were a joke, Finn blushed. His dark brown skin flushed beautifully with a deep, rosy pink tinge at his cheeks. “Oh. S-sorry,” he stuttered, darting his eyes away.

And shoot, if that weren’t the darn cutest thing Poe had seen in a long time. The porgs, sure, they had been alright. But Finn was some next level unholy mixture of drop dead gorgeous and cute as a button.

Poe pulled on the starchy uniform, so similar to the dress outfit he’d seen his dad wear to his mother’s funeral. The only difference was that this outfit belonged to a murderer. If you were even somewhat complicit about genocide you were guilty in Poe’s mind. Not that anyone couldn’t be redeemed, he supposed. He did up the shiny buttons and reluctantly put on the stiff felted cap. He believed in second chances for sure. And he supposed if the people working for the First Order were brainwashed, how guilty could they be? But Finn had still made a choice to leave and many never did.

“Okay,” Poe said, adjusting the cap on his head. “How do I look?”

Finn’s eyes dragged up Poe’s body, leaving a line of heat in their wake. When he got to the top his face seemed to be carefully neutral. There was only the hint of a grimace at the edges of his lips, in the slight furrow of his brow, the stiffness of his shoulders. “That bad, huh?” Poe asked, secretly disappointed.

“Well,” Finn said. “No. I mean, it fits you really well.” Finn’s eyes flickered down to the ground. “There are just, you know. Memories attached to the clothes. That’s all.”

At least Finn didn’t think he looked bad. But now Poe felt bad, like there was a dark rot eating away at his gut at the thought of Finn, who had almost subconsciously stood to attention just from looking at the uniform Poe was wearing. “I’m sorry, buddy,” he said softly. “Are you going to be alright with this?”

“I think so?” Finn said. He shook his head. “I don’t know. Poe…”

“Yeah?” Poe asked, stepping closer.

Finn’s eyes were solemnly round. “That hat is so terribly crooked.”

Poe blinked at the other man and then a laugh bubbled up from his toes. He couldn’t hold it in and shook his head. He didn’t know how Finn could be so strong in the midst of such terrible circumstances. “Why don’t you show me how it’s supposed to be then.”

“Subordinates aren’t supposed to comment on their superiors’ appearances,” Finn said very seriously.
He was clearly trying to make a joke about the dark situation, but it hit Poe like a punch to the stomach. Poe cleared his throat and thought fast. He didn’t want to say something that would make Finn shy away from moving on from his bad experiences. Humour could be a way of diffusing hard-to-process thoughts and emotions. So he smiled back as best as he could, though it felt about as difficult as peeling a pak’pah. It was just as rewarding though, as a miniscule amount of tension melted from Finn’s shoulders. “Superiors aren’t supposed to be stuck cleaning toilets on a First Order Death Star either,” Poe pointed out and Finn laughed. The sound warmed Poe down to his toes.

“I’ll fix it,” Finn said, and pulled the cap off Poe’s now-wild curls. They had been almost tame before spending hours being sweated through under his helmet. Now they seriously belied his genetic heritage. He would say one thing for them: Finn ran his hands through the curls in a much more satisfying way than if his hair had been stuck together with gel, which made Poe consider whether he should change his morning hair routine.

A shiver tickled Poe’s spine as Finn repeated the gesture. Poe leaned into the touch, eyes dropping closed reflexively. He almost groaned from frustration when Finn finished fiddling with the cap and stepped back to admire his handiwork.

“Much better,” Finn said.

Poe swallowed hard, about to debate leaning in to get a closer look at Finn’s dark brown eyes when the ship’s intercom system dinged pleasantly. “You are now arriving at your destination,” the ship said.

Finn had stepped back. “We should get ready,” he said.

Reluctantly, Poe agreed. They climbed back into the cockpit and Poe sat at the throttle. He could have sat back and relaxed as the autopilot did everything to get them docked but running through the motions of entering atmosphere, finding a place to dock the ship and then executing the landing procedure helped him feel centred. The First Order uniform was tight around the neck, the material chafing. Poe really didn’t like being dressed up in their clothes but if any First Order personnel were around then they had to be prepared.

Finn was silent during their descent, looking out the windows instead of at the computer readouts. Poe flicked the switch to extend the landing gear and checked his friend over his shoulder. “Everything alright?”

“It looks so cold,” Finn muttered.

“It’s a crystalline planet,” Poe said. “And it is probably cold out there. I’ve heard that the only colonies on this world have to stay inside because the planet’s surface is an inhospitable environment. They have to build shelters before they can mine anything.” “They can’t go outside?” Finn asked.

“A group of the species from this planet migrated to other planets so they could go outside,” Poe said. “I hear they’re happy on Maridun.”

“Hm,” Finn said. Poe docked the ship, not sure what he could possibly say that might cheer Finn up. He didn’t like seeing him upset but the entire ordeal to come was sure to be uncomfortable and upsetting.

He was right.
Finn

Finn flicked through views on his eye screens as he waited by the loading doors of the ship. It was an old force of habit: double checking all systems before embarking on any mission. Thermal readouts: nominal. Three beings on the other side of the door, thermal signatures partially cloaked on two (Stormtroopers) and normal on one much shorter being (native of the planet?). Radar: nominal. No incoming vessels. Auto targeting: nominal. No life forms present to target.

Poe huffed as he jogged into place beside Finn. “Ready?”

“Two Stormtroopers, one shorter being,” Finn replied automatically. He checked his blaster, making sure it had a full charge and was primed. He knew the proper settings by touch and barely had to glance at the readouts to feel confident in his assessment. “Ready when you are.”

Poe nodded. “Let’s open this motherfucker up.”

The cursing came as a pleasant shock: First Order troops never swore. It was a jolting reminder that the man behind him really did have his back, that they weren’t blindly walking under someone else’s orders: they were out here of their own volition trying to give the universe a chance. He straightened his shoulders, proud to have Poe on his team.

Finn opened the door. Both Stormtroopers raised their blasters to level at the two of them. Finn noticed that the third creature was strange-looking: very small with long arms and short legs and a fuzzy, distinctly non-humanoid face.

“State your business,” one of the Stormtroopers said.

“This is an unsanctioned visit,” the other said.

Poe stepped out from behind Finn. The pilot had his arms held loosely behind his back, the motion forcing his chest out. His head was held high, his chin raised, and his eyes narrowed. He even had the distinct look of someone who’d just smelled something bad, which was how all of the superior officers of the First Order looked all the time. Finn was so shocked by the transformation that he almost missed Poe’s speaking voice, which he'd pitched to be higher and more nasal than his usual voice. He even had that strange accent that all of the higher ups seemed to, the same accent Rey had.

“Are you trying to tell me that you know better than I do, FN...” he trailed off, blinking lazily like he could care less whether the Troopers lived or died, let alone if one of them gave him their number.

The Stormtrooper on the left’s blaster faltered in its upright position. “FN-92104,” he said.

Poe’s lips pulled further down as he scowled. “FN-92104,” he repeated, with a slight glance back at Finn. “Take note of that.”

“Yes sir,” Finn said.

Poe stepped off the cruiser and started to walk into the airlock, which was closed.

“Why is this door not open?” Poe asked.
The second Stormtrooper had tracked them with his blaster. They were off guard but still had their fingers on the triggers. Finn followed a step behind Poe and tried not to look back over his shoulder.

“Sir,” the second Stormtrooper said. “We were not expecting a delegation. I need the authorization codes–”

Poe waved a hand dismissively. “We are not a delegation. I have been instructed to relieve you two of your roles on this planet. Apparently the job is not getting done as it ought and someone who can actually be trusted has been assigned to the position.”

The Stormtroopers said nothing, although they had now followed the two of them to the airlock. “Sir?” one of them asked. “Do you have the authorization code? We can’t let you pass without–”

Poe pivoted on his heel. “Unbelievable,” he said, nose wrinkling in disgust. “The mere fact that we were not asked this immediately on our descent tells me that there is a situation that needs rectifying here.”

The Stormtroopers looked at each other and Poe stepped towards them. He pointed at one of them. “You. Are you as dense as you look? You are to take my ship back to the First Order at once. The orders have been transmitted from High Command and are considered classified information. No one is to know that we have switched places, do you understand?”

The Stormtroopers were clearly trying to fight their baser instincts not to challenge authority. Poe gave a short sigh and closed his eyes briefly as if annoyed with their very presence. “We are investigating a potential information leak,” he said. “I am not permitted to say anything further. Proceed to your duties, soldiers.”

The Stormtroopers hesitated for only a second (extreme subordination for a Trooper) and then saluted. “Yes sir,” they said in unison.

Poe turned to the creature which Finn assumed was a resident of the planet and nodded at them curtly. “I will be shown through the facility,” he snapped.

The small being bowed submissively and hurriedly showed Poe and Finn through the doors. Finn could not believe that had all worked. He could not believe it one bit.

They walked through several twisting corridors before coming to what looked like a large market. Finn could see several hollowed out corridors branched off from the one they were standing in. The place was just crawling with people: mostly the monkey-like Mygeetans but Finn could see Stormtroopers and other uniformed humanoid personnel scattered throughout the marketplace.

“Over here we have our meeting grounds,” the little fellow was saying. “As you can see, we–”

“I’d like to go over there,” Poe said, pointing to one of the corridors.

The fellow hesitated. “Are… are you sure, sir? I just mean, your comrades are more on the Knottely side of this facility.”

“I am sure,” Poe said.

The lemur-looking thing gulped. “I only mean, sir, that I believe you’d be much more comfortable if you followed me this way…”

But Poe was already striding off towards the corridor he had pointed out. Finn followed, checking
to see where the Mygeetan was. The little fellow had fled in a panic, not even bothering to show them any more sights.

“Have you been here before?” Finn asked in a low voice.

“Never in my life,” Poe said.

“Then how do you know where to go?” Finn asked.

Poe tilted his head and raised his eyebrows towards the left side of the corridor entrance. “That’s the Resistance insignia,” he said.

Finn stared at the wall. He had to move his head from side to side until the light caught at the edges of a small indentation. Sure enough, carved into the rock there was the same insignia he’d seen on Poe’s flight helmet and jacket. “How did you spot that from across the marketplace?”

“I knew what to look for,” Poe said, casting a sly grin over his shoulder. “I grew up with rebels, remember? My whole life has been spent looking for the right kinds of people, the right kinds of signs.”

The corridor twisted around like the roots of a giant tree, sometimes connecting and overlapping with other halls. They didn’t pass any people along the route until Poe made a left-hand turn inexplicably. Finn looked back over his shoulder to try and spot the insignia he’d been looking so hard for but couldn’t spot anything on the ever darkening crystalline walls.

“Why—” Finn started to ask but just then Poe held up a hand, so similar to the movements of a proper lieutenant that Finn felt the familiar stiffness pull his shoulders back.

Poe put his back to the wall and inched forwards. To Finn it looked like they were heading into an out-of-use maintenance hallway. The lights and phosphorescent stripes on the wall faded into black.

In front of him, Poe disappeared into the black. Finn heard a scraping thud and yelp and panicked. Uncomfortable with not being able to see, he quickly flicked through his viewer until he got to night vision. He checked his footing to make sure there were no craters or anything and then searched for Poe up ahead.

Poe was being held two feet off the ground by his throat by a gigantic shadowy figure. Finn yelped and instinctively held up his blaster, tapping the switch to prime it. “Let him go!” he shouted.

Oddly, even though he could probably barely see him, Poe held up his hand almost like he was waving Finn off. He couldn’t hear the pilot but the large fellow turned to glare at Finn, his eyes glowing like bright white stars. It took Finn a moment to realize that the alien must be wearing night vision goggles as well.

“I said let him go!” Finn snapped.

“Finn,” Poe croaked, his voice barely recognizable. “Don’t.” He was struggling against the hand choking to death but he didn’t want Finn to shoot the guy?

“I’m not going to let him kill you, Poe,” Finn said, hesitating.

The alien tilted its head at Finn. “What did you call him?”

Finn looked from Poe’s desperate, fading eyes to the alien’s. “Poe? Poe Dameron?”
“Poe Dameron the pilot?” the alien asked.

“Yes,” Finn said. He wasn’t about to lower his gun until Poe was safe and sound but had the alien’s grip on Poe’s neck slackened? “We’re with the Resistance.”

The alien dropped Poe. “Prove it, Stormtrooper.”

Finn froze. On the one hand, Poe was wheezing and gasping on the ground, technically safe for the moment. On the other hand, he could see really well through his helmet and it contained sensitive information. But on the other hand, Poe though alive and released, did sound like he might be hacking up a lung.

He took off his helmet. It wasn’t as dark as he had previously thought in the corridor: he could still vaguely see Poe and the smiley umber alien. “My name is Finn,” he said, using his Stormtrooper bravado. “And I need to get plans of a First Order attack back to General Leia Organa of the Resistance.”

The spade-headed figure reached towards the wall, flicking a switch to spark lights to life above them. The alien removed their night-vision goggles and peered at Finn. “And you say that this human is Poe Dameron? The Resistance’s finest pilot?”

“Yes, sir,” Finn said, eyes widening. “Or ma’am. Sorry.”

The alien peered at Finn and then bobbed their head. “Sir will do fine,” he said. His mouth was sort of tentaclely and he had two very sharp looking teeth protruding between them. “Enlighten me, Finn not-a-Stormtrooper. Why are you and Poe Dameron on Mygeeto and dressed as First Order employees?”

Poe had struggled to his feet behind the alien. He tried to speak but his voice came out as a croak and he bent over to cough again. Finn made a decisive choice to stride over to him now that nobody was in danger of being throat-crushed. He peered into Poe’s eyes which were tearing up. Poe seemed to be maybe recovering his breath but he shook his head at Finn. What did that mean? He wasn’t fine? He would be fine with time? Why couldn’t he be more specific?

“Finn not-a-Stormtrooper,” the alien said. “I apologize for injuring your Poe Dameron. However this is a restricted area as far as I am concerned. I must know your intentions.”

“To request passage,” Finn said. Was this guy deaf? It looked like he had ears...or maybe they were gills? Finn squinted but couldn’t be sure. “We need to be back at the Resistance base as soon as possible.”


The turnip-headed alien’s tentacles swarmed to the centre of its mouth area. “That is very bad.” His face turned towards Finn and his milky blue eyes seemed to narrow in consideration. It felt like he was being scanned with a truth-reader viewscreen that compared heart rates, pupil dilation and sweat gland activation. Captains typically used the screens to determine whether or not their troops were lying to them. Finn himself had used them several times until he had realized what they were being used for. The higher ups had always claimed they were simply monitoring their health but Finn knew better. They were trying to keep their troops in line and complacent.

The turnip alien made a wet snorting sound that did not come out of its tentacled mouth. “Very well, Finn not-a-Stormtrooper, Poe Dameron Resistance Fighter. I am Te’h-bali of Mon Cala. Follow me. We will take my ship to your base.”
“Thank you,” Finn said. He visually assessed Poe’s condition: flushed face, telltale marks that would become bruises around his throat, laboured breathing, red and watering eyes. T’eh-bali was already setting off and Poe was struggling to stand so Finn ducked under his arm and propped him up as they walked.

Poe faltered momentarily but his hand gripped Finn’s shoulder in what Finn took as a silent thanks. The lights were all on now, illuminating the corridor well enough that Finn no longer had to concern himself about tripping. He and Poe followed T’eh-bali through a maze of shipping containers until he walked right into what looked like just another junky box.

“That’s your ship?” Finn asked, incredulous.

T’eh-bali, whose noises until now had been indecipherable, made a sound that was clearly an affronted harumph. “I’ll have you know this is the finest shipping model ever invented for smuggling.”

Another smuggling ship? How come all Finn could meet around the galaxy were smugglers, jedis and rebels? How about some normal people for a change? He would love to meet someone whose idea of a rowdy good time was a quiet cup of tea and maybe some biscuits on the side if they were feeling particularly wild.

Poe wheezed out a laugh and pulled his arm from Finn’s shoulders, clearly able to stand on his own now. “He’s not trying to be insulting,” Poe assured T’eh-bali in a harsh rasp before coughing to clear his throat.

“Well he was being insulting,” T’eh-bali muttered.

“Sorry,” Finn said lamely, looking at Poe guiltily. In his defense, the First Order ships were all extremely fast and new and this one looked little better than that Millennium Falcon one had, so if they were pursued... That wasn’t really a defense against being rude though, he supposed. What a difference, being able to choose what you were and weren’t allowed to say made! Not always for the better, but at least Finn hoped he was learning and making progress.

T’eh-bali grabbed a headset off the wall, one that looked like it had been cut apart and pieced back together to accomodate for the spade shape of his head. He nodded stiffly at Finn, making direct eye contact as the tips of his mouth tentacles wriggled slightly. “Apology accepted, Finn not-a-Stormtrooper.”

Finn nodded back. The floor rolled beneath them suddenly, an alarming shift of the ground that caused the ship to tip from one way to the other. He had to grab hold of a handhold on the wall for dear life, his grip on his helmet preventing him from properly grabbing onto the wall to steady himself.

“What was that?” Finn asked, feeling sweat bead up at his neckline. He was suddenly hot, suddenly very afraid. He realized he had crouched down and his hand holding onto the wall had gone to his blaster in self defense.

Poe was looking at him with an expression in his eyes Finn couldn’t quite identify. It was almost fear, not quite pity, maybe sorrow. He straightened up, pushing his blaster behind him and rubbing his thumb on the edge of his helmet nervously. He was fine. He was fine.

“The First Order mine this planet for crystals. There are often explosions,” T’eh-bali said. He had grabbed a handhold as well, mouth tentacles wriggling more furiously now. He flicked a few switches and bowed slightly. “I must go to the cockpit, please excuse me. If the soldiers come you
must close the door and alert me.”

“Can’t we just close the door now?” Finn asked.

“If they come we must know,” T’eh-bali said. “Before they disable our ability to take off. It will take me a mere five minutes to complete the procedures and the door into the outer planet as well must be opened from the outside.” He hesitated. “Finn… if you would be willing to open it, you are dressed in a suitable outfit to combat the inhospitable planetary surface near the door.”

Finn licked his lips. “Sure. Just tell me what to do.”

Poe cleared his throat. “We can’t leave without him,” he said. “His helmet has the crucial information.”

T’eh-bali closed his eyes, his brows furrowing together. The tentacles calmed briefly, twitching only near the ends. “Apologies. I forgot this detail. There is a suit in that locker which will allow you to leave the ship safely,” he said, gesturing to the wall. “It would be best if I fly the ship.”

But Poe can fly anything, Finn thought to himself. He was about to say something when Poe shook his head. “Okay,” Finn said, searching in Poe’s eyes for reassurance. “I’ll cover you from here.”

T’eh-bali nodded. He clapped his hands together, the pointy fingernails making a clicking noise as they made contact. “I will commence the process.”

Finn waited until the alien had gone and turned to Poe, who was already struggling into the large, balloon-looking suit. “You can’t go out there,” he said. “Didn’t you hear that the First Order was coming? It’s less suspicious if a Stormtrooper is opening the door, Poe.”

Poe shook his head, not meeting Finn’s eyes. “Your helmet has the plans, Finn. That’s more important than anything.”

What’s the point of freedom if those fighting for it aren’t left to enjoy it? Finn didn’t have an answer or a rebuttal to what Poe had said. He licked his lips, trying to put some moisture back into them. The air here was so dry. And it was so cold outside but still the sheer nerves made Finn feel like he was sweating to death.

“It’ll be fine,” Poe said, not at all reassuringly. He clipped the side clips on the suit and grabbed the helmet. “Get that blaster charged. T’eh-bali’s tentacles were moving way too nervously for me. I’d bet anything the First Order is doing a lot more than mining here.”

Betting? Gambling was outlawed within the ranks of the Order, although Finn suspected that an awful lot of regular things were “outlawed” for the Troopers who were supposed to be mindless robots of destruction. He shifted his weight uncomfortably, remembering the closet on the Death Star. “Uh, how sure of a bet is this?”

Poe raised an eyebrow. “Just a hunch, really.”

“A hunch?”

“A gut feeling,” Poe said, clicking open the helmet. “You know, where you can just tell that something’s off?”

The moment they had landed on Jakku, with those cowering civilians and their wide, pleading eyes, Finn had known that was wrong. When Slip had reached for anyone, anything, in his dying moments, Finn had known that was not fair. When Poe had looked at Finn in the closet, pupils
blown wide and Finn had just known that he had to kiss him.

“Oh,” Finn said. “That’s what a gut feeling is?”

Poe looked at Finn in the brief second before he put on his helmet and the skin at the edges of his eyes crinkled in a fond sort of way. “Yeah, buddy.”

“Oh,” Finn said. “Be careful.”

The helmet was a clear glass bubble around Poe’s head as he sealed it in place. With a thumbs up and a cocky grin he stomped out of the open ramp of the ship and was out of sight. Finn felt his intestines twist around each other, a rolling mass of unhappy snakes coiling and contracting and hissing. He put a hand over his stomach and decided he would put on his helmet. Should he count the seconds until they were ready to lift off?

Looking around, Finn did a quick inventory of the little cargo hold on the ship to try and settle his nerves. He spied what looked to be part of the intercom system, near the switches T’eh-bali had flicked on. Presumably he had been activating the system before heading off to the cockpit. Finn went over and pressed what he figured was the communications button. “Finn here. Poe is outside. Just checking in.” He released the button and waited.

One one thousand. Two one thousand. Three one thousand. Four one thousand. Five one–

“Finn. T’eh-bali here. I have almost completed my pre-flight check. Is all clear?”

Finn released a breath but didn’t relax. “All clear,” he said.

“Good. I have Poe here. His voice only comes to my headset but all is well.”

Finn tapped his foot on the ground one, two, sound off. I don’t know but I’ve been told, Supreme Leader Snoke is mighty bold.

He hummed the song as he made his way out the ramp to check on the corridor. The lights overhead were flickering slightly as the ground rolled again. If I should die in a raid, if I should die in a raid.

The lights steadied but flickered again. Bury me in a starry grave, bury me in a starry grave.

Finn checked his blaster and marched back up the ramp. Place my helmet on my chest, place my helmet on my chest.

Bury me in my shiny best, bury me in my shiny best. He heard a shout from around the corner and wondered if they shouldn’t have turned the corridor lights on. He’d thought they were far enough from the marketplace for them to be seen but was obviously wrong.

Sound off. “You there, state your intentions!”

Finn turned around, saluting sharply. An out-of-breath lieutenant, flanked by six Troopers were fanning out from the corridor entrance. “Sir,” he said instinctively. One two.

The lieutenant waved off the salute. “You’re not supposed to be back here. This isn’t supposed to be back here. What is your number?”

“FN-9012,” Finn said. Sound off.

“That’s the number of this corridor,” the lieutenant snapped. “What’s your number, soldier.”
“Sorry,” Finn said, turning about face and marching into the ship. He hoped he looked odd enough to be ignored, but if some of them followed him then he might be able to pick a few off instead of facing off the whole crew at once. *Sound off.*

He broke into a run when he fully entered the ship and pressed the intercom button. “First Order here,” he said, and then his gut twisted so sharply that he ducked. He felt heat brush the top of his helmet and rolled, instinctively bringing his blaster up as he turned. He let off two shots, his peripherals registering two white targets before he could quite focus on the two Troopers. *One, two, three, four.*

Both fell to the ground, stunned. Finn yanked off his helmet and stowed it in a crate before snapping one from a fallen Trooper, Poe’s words clear in his mind. *Protect the helmet, find your Poe, protect the helmet, find your Poe.*

*Tell him that it’s time to go.*


Silence over the intercom for just enough time that Finn decided he hadn’t gotten the message. He raced out of the ship, ducking and vaulting over the last step onto the ground. He rolled as he hit the ground, not as gracefully as before but at least it saved his skin. He felt the dull burn of blaster fire grazing his upper arm but with one eye squinted he aimed and fired. That was three. Three Troopers left and one lieutenant, providing they hadn’t called for backup. It was possible that there was a platoon coming, which meant they probably had five to ten minutes. If T’eh-bali’s estimate was accurate they should be safe. That was a big if.

And Finn had a bad gut feeling about this. The ground here was littered with cargo crates, all tall mazes of hiding places. His breathing was loud in his ears, along with the almost deafening sound of his heartbeat pounding inside his helmet.

A flash of white got Finn’s blaster up and firing before he even registered what it was. A thrown helmet. He ducked back quickly and then fired just as the soldier stepped out, gun raised.

“Poe!” Finn shouted. He heard scuttling feet and turned, blaster raised. White. He shot and turned back towards where he figured Poe had gone. How many boxes could one room hold? Finn was so frustrated going around and around in what felt like circles. He panicked at a blur of motion flickering in his peripherals and he turned, blaster raised, ready to fire at–

Poe. The pilot was crouched down by the uneven surface of the cavern wall. He had his hands in the air in a peaceful gesture, his face concerned. “What’s going on?”

“The First Order is here,” Finn hissed, lowering his blaster. “Open the door, we gotta go.”

Poe’s voice was muffled, but audible. “T’eh-bali said not yet.”

“The First Order–” Finn started to say and then flinched. He could feel something coming, almost like a presence. He put a hand on his chest where the lightsaber had burned its way through him. His wound hadn’t really hurt like this since he had been on Crait, watching…

“Oh, shit,” Finn said. The swear word felt right, rolling off his tongue, denoting the hard, sharp feelings striking him right through like the acidic burn of blaster fire. “Kylo Ren is here.”

Poe’s face transformed with horror and then he pushed Finn *hard.*
Finn stumbled, turning to see the last Stormtrooper turning his smoking blaster to fire at Finn. His mind didn’t work as quickly as his trigger finger did, felling the white plastic-covered figure before it could shoot him. “Poe, what was that about? Why did you push...”

Poe was on the ground, red blossoming at his shoulder, blood soaking through the bright yellow of the surface suit. Finn’s stomach dropped, his heart beating in his toes and fingertips and up in the crux of his neck. He heard someone shout as he fell to Poe’s side, cataloguing facts but feeling like he was separate from his body.

Poe’s helmet was cracked, the glass likely shattered when he’d fallen back. He must have hit the wall hard. Poe’s eyes were closed, so he might be unconscious. There were bruises around the neck starting to show as dark smudges from where T’eh-bali had held him. And finally, the wound at shoulder: bleeding profusely.

Finn glanced up ahead and behind, shoulder checking for danger. He spotted the switch on the wall and noted the sharp corners: that must have been what Poe had hit his helmet on. The sharp corners could easily have broken the glass and caused him to briefly pass out. There were telltale puffs of steam coming from Poe’s mouth now that the helmet was letting in the cold so at least he was breathing.

Finn made an executive decision then and pressed the button to open the cavern “door”. It was really a hole in the roof, Finn noted with the detached version of himself that also wisely flung Poe over his shoulder and made his way in a careful crouch back to the ship.

Sounds started coming back with the first blast of extreme cold: the voice of that First Order lieutenant jabbering away somewhere nearby, the howl of icicle-snapping wind funneling through the ceiling. The beat of his heart, ham-ham-hammering in his ears. He met no resistance on his way back to the ship although he did have to step over several bodies on his way. He was sure he was missing something…

The stab through his lightsaber wound hit him like a dagger. Finn doubled over, almost losing his grip on Poe. He forced himself to straighten up, his free hand wavering between clutching at his chest and retaining its hold on the blaster.

Finn decided to try out some of the words he’d heard Poe saying. “Shit. Fuck. Motherfucker.”

Poe shifted on Finn’s shoulder, and Finn scuttled up the ramp into the ship quickly before letting the other man down on his feet.

Poe’s face was ashen, whether from cold or shock, Finn didn’t know. “Sounds good,” Poe grunted. The wound was still bleeding: Finn didn’t think an artery had been hit but blasters left big, gaping holes that couldn’t easily be staunched. This he knew from experience.

“I opened the door,” Finn said automatically, then. “What? What sounds good?”


“Oh,” Finn said. He felt frozen, though not from cold. He didn’t know what to do with his hands. He cast around for something to use against Poe’s shoulder to try and stop the bleeding. “I was just trying it out.”

“And?” Poe asked. He pulled a folding chair out from the wall and sat down in it. Finn couldn’t tell why he was struggling until he noticed that Poe was only using only one arm to try and belt himself in.
“Let me help you,” Finn said, but Poe waved him off.

“Close the door,” Poe said.

Finn shook his head. He would help Poe belt himself in after then.

He reached for the button that would seal the ship door and pushed on it.

Nothing happened.

Finn pushed harder and realized his hand wasn’t moving any closer towards the button. It was actually moving away from the button.

“Close the door!” Poe said, urgency crackling in his voice.

“I’m trying,” Finn said, but even speaking the words were an effort. He concentrated on his hand, focusing his energy on his straining fingertips. His lightsaber wound was burning now, a hot, dripping pain like magma was pouring out of the wound through the hole out the back. It was only a twisted scar now, like the mouth of an angry volcano but it felt like it might be freshly bleeding.

Sweat beaded on his forehead, and when he focused on pulling off his helmet to wipe that away he couldn’t even move his spare hand! His eyes squinted and then he felt it: a hard push through the air from invisible hands coming towards his torso. Someone was in here, unseen, attempting to bend his body to their will.

Finn had once been under someone else’s control, for almost twenty years. He had grown up in barracks, under constant guard, denied all basic human rights save food and shelter. He had been told he should believe in the First Order, should want to kill and be killed.

And Finn knew what it felt like to break free of that. With great effort, he turned his head to stare at the burning glare of Kylo Ren. The man was across the cavern from the ship, standing there with his arms outstretched. It looked like he was trying awfully hard: when Finn zoomed in with his viewscope he could see sweat on the man’s brow just like on Finn’s. With all of that power and that pride, Kylo Ren was only human. The door gaping open, letting in the inhospitable cold of the planet’s surface must be taxing his strength.

Finn pushed as hard as he could and hit the button.

Kylo’s face twisted. There was an ugly sneer staining his monstrous face that looked like it might not have belonged at one point. But that with the unkempt black curls around his head, he did look like he was fast becoming a true monster.

The door was slow to close but it was going, clearly held back by Kylo. Finn saw Kylo’s eyes shift from him, off to the right and he followed the man’s gaze right to Poe. Poe’s face was stricken, sweating, even greyer than before. It looked like he was trying so desperately to hold something in and failing.

He yelled in pain, blood trickling out of his nose and then Finn felt suction and the wind around his ears. He made a grab for the helmet but missed it by a hair.

“NO!” Poe shouted as the door suddenly snapped shut and the ship rocketed into the sky. Finn stumbled, caught off balance and just barely avoided hitting his head on the floor. He tasted blood as he bit his cheek and spat out the coppery blood.

Right. Seatbelts.
He dragged himself over to Poe, buckling the limp body into the seat safely before he pulled out the chair next to him and sat down.

Poe was breathing heavily beside him. Finn reached a hand out behind the man’s head and unclipped the broken bubble. He was careful when he removed it, trying to make sure no sharp edges snagged on Poe’s head. Poe’s eyes fluttered open when Finn put two fingers on his neck to feel for his pulse and they met Finn’s, full of grief.

“He got it,” Poe rasped, his voice hoarse from screaming and being shot and strangled. He would definitely be visiting the med bay when they got back. “He got the helmet, Finn.”


He pulled off his glove to feel Poe’s temperature. A bit clammy but the suit he was wearing appeared to be holding heat adequately even without the helmet seal or the shoulder… He balled up his glove and pressed it on Poe’s shoulder, applying pressure to the wound. Hopefully they weren’t too long of a ride from the Resistance base, but it was possible that the trip could take a few hours. Finn didn’t want Poe to lose too much blood in that time. He would have to keep Poe stable until they could get proper med droids on the job.

Poe’s eyes were drooping shut with fatigue and then what he had just said registered in Finn’s mind. “Wait, what? He got what?”

Poe’s eyes were closed but his lips moved in a mumble. “The helmet. With the plans.”

Finn pressed a bit harder on Poe’s wound and the pilot inhaled sharply. “Poe,” Finn said, making eye contact with the slits that were Poe’s eyes as he struggled to keep his eyes opened. “Can you still hear me?”

Poe’s slitted eyes blinked shut and face sagged into forced relaxation as his breathing evened out. He didn’t say anything.

“Fuck,” Finn muttered.
Finn

The Resistance base had moved while they had been away. Finn had been unpleasantly surprised when he had checked the navigational readouts on the computer system and seen they were nowhere near the last coordinates he’d remembered, which meant that they were a lot farther than he had hoped from a proper med bay.

T’eh-bali had informed him that the rebels had temporarily holed up on Yavin 4, one of the very oldest surviving Rebellion bases. It had taken them a full day if not a bit more to get there because T’eh-bali was very careful to take the safest routes possible, but they were finally back.

When they had landed they were greeted by medical staff with stretchers and, Finn was surprised to see, General Organa. She was leaning heavily on a cane but her eyes found Finn’s. The look she gave him made him straighten up in his suit proudly with his helmet under his arm.

He let the medical crew surround the unconscious Poe and walked forward to give his report. He hadn’t been able to sleep and probably looked and smelled terrible but he wanted to make sure he could pass on the proper information as quickly as possible so it would be in the right hands. Luckily, Stormtrooper outfits were fairly efficient at recycling air both for breathing and smells coming out.

“General Organa,” he said, nodding his head. He held out his helmet, rescued from the cargo locker he’d safely stored it in.

General Organa raised an eyebrow. “And just what is this?”

“I have what plans I was able to download on the helmet, ma’am. In the internal data storage. They have lots of shields up to block communications so it was the only way to get this out.”

General Organa almost looked impressed but Finn wasn’t a child and he had just been doing his duties. “Anyway, here they are,” he said. “Please make sure the right people get this information. And there’s also a prisoner onboard the ship. We captured him.”

“Son,” General Organa said, and gestured for Finn to come in closer. He stepped forward, stiffening in surprise when she put her arms around him. This was a hug! General Organa was hugging him!

“Ma’am?” Finn asked.

“Thank you, Finn,” General Organa said. “For bringing this back, for bringing Poe back, and for coming back yourself.”

He was a soldier, only he supposed that he wasn’t any longer. He was just Finn now.
He hesitated momentarily but allowed himself a moment to wrap his arms around her and close his eyes. If only Slip could see him now, hugging his superior officer, hell, if only Phasma could see him now. Well she would be pissed off, that’s for sure.

“Um, you’re welcome,” he said, stepping back. He scuffed one shoe on the ground as she took the helmet from him. “Thank you for… well. Thanks. Did the others make it back?”

“They did.” General Organa inclined her head towards him, her eyes kind. “They will be in a briefing later today which you are welcome to join.”

Finn nodded, almost feeling like the bobblehead again. He could feel every muscle beneath the plastoid suit, tense and prepared, what for? There was the almost imperceptible shake of adrenaline in his bones: he knew from his training where his limits lay, how hard he could push himself before he fell from exhaustion, unable to lift even a finger off the ground.

To sum up: he hadn’t slept now for some 60-odd hours, hadn’t showered or shaved in that time either. They’d had ration bars onboard the Resistance ship and he had forced one or two down despite the nerves fluttering his stomach like a loose, agitated butterfly. He knew that from training too, to eat something, anything before a big mission.

But they hadn’t had anything on the Death Star, neither food nor water. T’eh-bali had been kind enough to share what little water storage he’d had aboard his ship, but he’d regretfully informed Finn that he had been just about to restock his food storage before they’d taken off and hadn’t had time to pack anything. A quick search of the two Stormtroopers they’d taken with them (one dead, one simply unconscious, now a prisoner of the Resistance) had turned up one ration bar which Finn had split in two and tried desperately to get Poe to eat.

Poe had been in and out of consciousness, skin heating up and pulse erratic all the while. He’d been a bit delirious, Finn thought, though his first aid training was rudimentary at best. He knew what they’d taught Stormtroopers, which was to say, how to save a superior officer in case of a crisis. This involved restarting their hearts, patching up fatal wounds, administering emergency blood, and checking for infections. They had always been explicitly forbidden to rouse a fallen Stormtrooper no matter the situation they were in, which Finn now realized was very nasty of the First Order.

He’d found an old first aid kit and a very small, disused medical room on the ship which he had ransacked, finding enough bandages to make up for the lack in the Stormtrooper med kits. Luckily, the fallen Trooper’s medical pack looked unused which meant it included the requisite items to patch up a downed S.O. The other Stormtrooper, who had been unconscious at the start of their voyage but who Finn had bound securely and strapped into one of the seats across the bay from Poe, had struggled against Finn searching his pack after having robotically searched the downed Trooper.

“You’re a traitor,” the man had spat, fury in his dull blue eyes. His hair was a flat black and his skin a light tan. “Either that or you’re just a regular piece of scum. We will destroy you and everything you love.”

Finn hadn’t bothered to pay attention to the man’s snide comments earlier but the hatred dripping from the words caught his ear. He glanced up from the medical kit, which he’d decided to simply detach from the belt to look quizzically into the man’s eyes. He wasn’t sure what he would find—he was desperate to find a shred of humanity, but all he saw was a lost soul, swimming in some believed cause. Was he any better, with the fires of the rebellion burning strong in his core, that he would have so easily killed a fellow human being earlier, albeit one in the clothes of the supposed enemy?
He chose to ignore the man but felt the swell of anger in the room until he closed his eyes and forced out a deep breath, inviting calm to enter instead. He did his best to rebandage Poe’s wound over his Stormtrooper glove which was still pressed tight to the man’s shoulder. He knew well enough not to remove or disturb the wound as best as he could, lest he tear away the small amount of clotting Poe’s body had been able to do. It was still bleeding sluggishly, not having clipped any major arteries luckily but still a large, burning hole straight through. Finn almost smiled at that: they would have almost matching wounds when they were done.

Being primarily in the cockpit Poe probably didn’t have any other large scars… Finn had to bite on his cheek to keep himself from thinking too hard about that. His friend’s skin was an unpleasant greenish grey now, and Poe was getting colder by the second. He knew how to administer blood at least: they had been thoroughly trained in that during their training.

It was too easy, muscle memory even took over while his mind drifted. He swabbed his arm and cut Poe’s suit while waiting for it to dry to do the same to his friend. Wrap the band around the arm and inject the needle near the bend in the elbow. Check that the flow was clean, the bag filling up beside him. In a true emergency, soldiers didn’t have the luxury of time so they were to place themselves gravitationally above the fallen, moving fingers in a clutching motion to keep the flow of blood moving properly.

It was uncomfortable to be sure, to bend over Poe’s arm and gently pierce the skin with the needle, taping it securely in place before he checked the blood bag (a quarter full by now) and opened the flow to Poe’s arm. He held the bag up above Poe’s head and watched as the blood continued to leave him. He could only give so much at one time, he knew, but hopefully it would give Poe the time he needed to make it back to the base.

He counted the seconds until he reached ten minutes and then he found a hook above Poe’s head that was probably for coats or helmets to let the bag hang from. He treated his arm carefully and wished desperately for Poe to hang in there. He felt Poe’s pulse and hoped with all of his might as he crunched on the last half of the ration bar. His heart was beating fairly steadily if still a bit slowly, at least for now.

The Stormtrooper had fallen silent by then, maybe having tired himself out with the steady ranting he’d been doing. Finn wanted to lay back and fall asleep but wasn’t ready to trust the Stormtrooper not to attempt an escape. So he pushed himself to his feet and picked three water rations from the compartment T’eh-bali had pointed out to him earlier. He walked towards the imprisoned Stormtrooper and held one up.

The man stared at the water ration and then at Finn, clearly suspicious. “What’s that?”

“Water,” Finn said. “Do you want some?”

The Stormtrooper stared. “It’s not poisoned is it?”

Finn closed his eyes. This guy took an awful lot of self control to deal with. His squad mates may not actually miss him as much as Finn had previously thought they might. “I could just shoot you again, and aim a little higher up this time if I wanted to kill you,” he said flatly. The Stormtrooper had only been grazed by Finn’s earlier shot, but had hit his head when stumbling back. Finn had glanced at the wound when he had secured the man but it had already mostly stopped bleeding so he had patched it up gently and left it alone.

“Oh,” the Stormtrooper said. “How would I drink it?”

“I’m not untying you,” Finn said. “But I can pour some water in your mouth.”
The Stormtrooper was silent for a few seconds, clearly mulling over the thought. He finally agreed and Finn helped him drink some water, a bit surprised that the man didn’t try to headbutt him or otherwise attempt another form of escape. He simply watched Finn in silence as Finn then returned to Poe’s side to check on the IV and try to get him to drink some water.

They hadn’t spoken any more to each other aside from the two other times Finn had offered the man a drink of water during the long voyage. The rest of the time had been spent at Poe’s side, monitoring his vitals. Their bodies could be so strong and yet so fragile, and the blasters that the Stormtrooper used left such damage in their wake.

The Stormtroopers themselves left the same amount of damage behind… Finn contemplated all of the places he had been to in training and his first real mission on Jakku and the faces of the villagers before they had all been shot down: men, women, children. Families. People.

Now that they were finally safe on the base, Finn’s rational brain told him that he should go eat and regain his strength before he attempted to seek out Poe, but he hesitated.

“Poe will be in the medical bay I am sure,” General Organa said, a resigned look on her face. “I think they will tell you to get changed and to eat a decent meal, but if you want to go see him for yourself, I think you should.”

Finn nodded gratefully, a strange swell of emotions stopping all words at the back of his throat. He swallowed down the feelings and saluted, confused by the armour and their current setting on this forest of a planet.

It reminded him a bit of Takodana, although instead of towering buildings among the leaves the Rebels’ bases were squat and ground-coloured. It made sense as a matter of camouflage, and Finn wondered just how long the Rebels had been stationed here. He had to ask for directions twice, trying not to meet anyone’s eyes as he did. He was afraid of what he would see there: fear of the uniform, or much worse: fear of the person inside the uniform.

“Finn!”

The shout came as Finn turned a corner when he thought he must be getting close. He was shocked when a second later, a bundle of fighter pilot flung themselves into his arms. He was woefully unprepared for his second (!!!) hug of the day (!!!) but steadied himself quicker this time.

When he was released he stepped back to examine Jessika Pava, whose eyes were wide with fright. He hadn’t thought that anything could scare these Resistance fighters but noticed a small group of them down the hall: Niv Lek, Bas, Wright, a few who hadn’t been involved in their mission and a few more who had. Those who had been with him looked about as ill-rested as he felt.

“Jessika,” Finn said. “You made it back.”

“I think our trips went a bit better than yours did,” Jessika said. She tilted her head at him. “You look like shit.”

“Uh,” Finn said.

“Jess,” Bas said, rolling his eyes.

“Well he does,” Jessika snapped. “Didn’t anyone tell you to take a fucking break, Finn?”

Finn looked around, at a loss. “I–”
“He’s here to see Poe just like we are,” Wright said.

“Go easy on him,” a pilot who hadn’t been in their mission but who Finn recognized as Yolo Ziff from their mission on Starkiller base.

“Shut the fuck up,” Jessika said. “Can’t any of you see he’s about to drop dead of exhaustion here? Finn,” she turned to him with a kinder look in her eyes and put a hand on his arm. “Why don’t you go take a nap at least? One of us will come and get you if Poe comes out of surgery.”

“Oh,” Finn said.

Jessika watched him carefully and then motioned for Wright to come over. “Here. Why don’t you come with us? We’ll get you out of that armour at least. Into some normal clothes.”

Normal.

Finn felt like he was breathing hard, like his composure was slipping. He also suddenly felt very tired, the past few days of work with only brief snatches of five, ten minute rests catching up to him. “Okay,” he said quietly. “I can’t see Poe yet?”

“None of us can,” Bas piped up. “They’ve got the droids working double time on him in there.”

The door they were all huddled around burst open, revealing a glimpse of the room behind: Finn saw Poe, as pale as a sheet beneath the bright lights they had shining on him, enveloped in a clear bubble of a bacta suit that Finn recognized: he’d been in it after getting stabbed with a lightsaber. A human medical officer stomped out, blood coating her hands from fingertip to wrist. She pointed at the huddle of pilots and Finn recognized her as the doctor who had helped him recover after Kylo Ren had stabbed him. She must be the Chief of Surgery here. “One of you. You don’t look busy. I need one of you to find me a blood donor.”

“There’s not enough in storage?”

This came from a very familiar voice behind them, one that almost had Finn breaking down in tears of relief. Rey stood at the end of the hall, her hair in three perfect buns, the air around her almost shimmering with power. “I catalogued and took inventory of the blood stores only this morning,” she said. “We have more than enough of the most common types, Doctor Kalonia, I’m sure.”

Doctor Kalonia rubbed her forehead tiredly, smearing some unpleasant looking substance as she did. “We have everything from Wookie to Human but within the humans there are several blood types. Poe unfortunately has one of our rarer blood types.”

“Excuse me,” Finn said. “But what is a blood type?” He’d thought there was only one type: blood.

The doctor gave Finn a weary and confused look. “There are different blood types within humans. If we give him the wrong one his body will reject it and attack itself, essentially. It’s more complex than that, but that’s a nice simplified version of the truth.”

“And we’ve none left of Poe’s blood type?” Rey asked. She obviously knew about as much about blood types as Finn did from the dubious look on her face.

“No,” the doctor said. “We had some of his blood but it was on one of the ships that the First Order targeted when we were trying to flee the Raddus. We’ve put him in a flexpoly suit which should help him regenerate in time but he’s simply lost too much to recover quickly enough. We need at least two or three donors and we need them quickly. You lot need to search the villagers for
someone who can come help. We need AB negative or O negative blood, people. If they don’t
know their blood types, bring them anyway. We can test them. Lord knows we are short of
basically everything right now.” She stared at the pilots, who stared back. “Go!”

The pilots, except Jessika and Wright, scattered. Finn watched them go desperately. “Excuse me
again,” he said. “But how quickly would he die if he got the wrong blood?”

The doctor looked at him strangely. “We would know something is wrong very quickly, and if too
much of the wrong blood has entered his system...” She frowned and stepped forward, tilting her
head to the side a bit as she peered at Finn, clearly recognizing him from his stint in the clear,
artificial bacta-filled suit. “Were you the one who brought Mister Dameron back to us?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Finn said. He suddenly felt like he might throw up. “I gave him some blood when
we were on the ship... I didn’t know it could hurt him! They always told us that all of us Troopers
could give blood to any officers who were downed so I just assumed...”

“How long ago was it that you did this?” the doctor asked. She gave him a quick once over and
then gestured for Finn to follow her, despite the protests of the pilot women beside him (He’s too
tired, he needs a break, etc).

“Maybe eight hours ago? I think?” Finn said. He couldn’t remember. His recollection of time was
bleary.

“I would hate to take that much blood twice in a day but it won’t kill you,” she mused, seating Finn
in a chair. “You make it sound like all Stormtroopers are universal blood donors.”

Finn shrugged. “I have no clue,” he said, watching with detached interest as Jessika deftly
unsnapped the plastoid arm plates and rolled up the black fabric of his right sleeve.

“Didn’t you bring one back with you? As a prisoner?” Doctor Kalonia asked. When Finn nodded,
she pointed to Wright. “You will go and fetch the Stormtrooper if he is willing to donate us his
blood.”

The doctor performed the same procedure Finn had to himself hours ago but much more quickly
and much less painfully. She took only one small vial of his blood before putting a stopper on the
tube: it filled up with blood and his arm suddenly felt oddly full, like now that there was an
opening his blood was frustrated at not being able to rush out and spill all over the floor. He shifted
uncomfortably on the chair, trying to relieve the pressure but unable to.

Now that he was sitting within the Resistance base in a chair, in a warm room, surrounded by
Resistance fighters and doctors and Rey, Finn felt the struggle of being awake weigh heavily on his
shoulders. The doctor performed some very quick test and then came back, eyebrows raised. “Well
I’ll be damned. You are an O Negative donor alright. No wonder it’s so rare for us to find people
who are of your blood type,” she mused. “The First Order has kidnapped them all across the
galaxy. You say all Stormtroopers are like this?”

“Yes,” Finn said, nodding in agreement. He wasn’t entirely sure what he was agreeing to. He felt
very cozy, although sitting in armour wasn’t generally recommended for extended periods of time.
They usually stood, even on transport ships, for hours and hours. Really the only time he
remembered sitting was for meal breaks, for which they only removed their helmets.

He swallowed against a nasty taste at the back of his throat and tilted his head back until it made
contact with the nice firm wall behind him. “Hey,” he said to Rey, who was hovering above Finn,
her dark eyes wide in her light face. “Are you spinning the room with the Force?”
“What?” Rey asked, her accent thick and syrupy.

“Because of all the colours,” Finn said, making note of how her head seemed to be melting into a rainbow swirl that merged seamlessly with the background. “There are so many…”

“Finn?” Rey asked, her voice dropping four octaves as she seemed to be saying the word over an epoch. Finn’s vision contracted until all he could see was her melting into the darkness of a cave or a sand pit or the starry skies above.

Poe

“That’s it. One more turn and we’ll be heading home.”

When Poe tilted his head up, he saw his mother’s beam light up her face like the sun. He smiled back, feeling carefully with his tongue for the tooth he had lost only that morning.

“Watch where you’re flying, Poe,” she cautioned, her eyes crinkling at the edges like her skin might be made of paper. He never really paid attention before to how thin skin could be, how easily it transformed into something utterly unrecognizable, like paint on a canvas.

Poe turned forwards, watching the tops of the trees come into view as the A-wing banked slowly under his control. The power in the throttle was all his to command: he could fly the ship into the ground, or into the sky never to return. What would that be like, he wondered, flying forever… his butt would probably become chair shaped.

“Slowly now,” his mother said, her voice in his ear soft and reassuring. When she spoke he felt the confidence she had in him, felt it resonate through his bones and down to his very soul.

He scrunched up his nose in concentration and bit his lip.

“Now Poe,” his mother said. “What do we not do?”

_We don’t bite our lips or tongue when we’re flying._

“And why is that?”

_You could hit something and bite your tongue off._

“That’s right, Poe. Do you remember how to land?”

He did. He knew the feeling of tires rolling on the dirt road behind their home, could almost taste the dust and the heaviness of gravity pushing him down towards the planet’s core. He could land this ship in his sleep.

The nose tipped down. “Not that far. Level her off, Poe.” The farm came into view, somewhere his father was probably cooking up a storm and waiting for his two hungry fighter pilots to come home safely.

“Easy.”

The trees rushed up beside them, whipping past so quickly he could barely make out the details of the needle leaves and rough trunks. “Good, now touch down.”
The plane eagerly jumped at his command, and Poe felt his mother’s hands above his, gently guiding the plane towards the landing strip. He could always feel her hands on his when he flew, knew that any motion he wanted the plane to go through was possible because she believed in him.

The wheels brushed earth with a hard jerk and then they were down, applying brakes, tilting up flaps, and too soon they were at a crawl, and driving back home.

“If you put your mind to it Poe, you can accomplish anything.”

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Finn

“That’s right, FN-2187. March with the rest of them.”

Finn held his head. “But it hurts.” He’d been experiencing needles of pain to his jaw and head.

Captain Phasma grabbed him by the upper arm and yanked him to his feet. “You will walk by yourself or I will cut you down, soldier.”

Finn walked, throat closing up around the tears he knew were threatening to spill out of his eyes.

“Is something the matter, Trooper?”

“No sir,” Finn said, trying to wipe the snot away as quickly as he could. He didn’t want Phasma to see that he was crying. He was an embarrassment. He knew that.

“March!”

Pain continued to radiate, connecting his jaw to his forehead, dagger-sharp stabs of hurt that only lessened when he forced himself to relax the muscles in his face somewhat. Where was he? Sitting… uncomfortable… Poe.

Poe.

“Poe needs blood,” he said, eyes snapping open as he sat straight up. The pounding in his head spread from his forehead to his eyes, radiating out through his temples and down his spine. His empty stomach rolled unhappily, which convinced him to double over and retch.

Nothing came up, which was a minor blessing. Although if anything had, Rey would have caught it as she was standing in front of him with a kidney-shaped dish thrust beneath Finn’s mouth.

“Thanks,” Finn said, or tried to before he heaved again. His stomach was furious, so upset about something that he could no longer remember. He spat the bitter taste of bile from his mouth before heaving one more time. Again he spat and thankfully this time his stomach quieted down somewhat, although now it was clenching tightly against itself like it was still mad at him.

“Poe,” Finn said, looking up at Rey.

Rey shook her head.

Finn’s stomach agreed with his mind and plummeted somewhere far beneath the ground. It couldn’t be. Poe? Gone? “He’s not—”
“Oh,” Rey said, eyes widening. “Sorry. He’s alive, though unconscious. Last I checked on him he’d got a bit more colour in his cheeks so that’s something. They think they’ve found another donor, it’s just a matter of getting him here.”

Finn sagged back in his chair. “That’s good.” He glanced down at his one arm which was still uncovered, but instead of blood coming out there was some clear liquid going in from a bag up ahead. “What’s that? Did they take enough for Poe—”

Rey laughed. “They took more than enough. You can only lose so much blood before it’s dangerous for you, Finn. That’s saline fluid, because someone is severely dehydrated. Doctor Kalonia, he’s awake.”

The doctor he remembered from earlier appeared, this time in a clean uniform, no scrubs or gloves or alarming blood on her hands. She produced a flashlight from a pocket and proceeded to shine it unpleasantly in Finn’s eyes. He’d been trained not to flinch away from an inspection and she nodded when she was done. “Right. You are to go back to sleep immediately.”

“What?” Finn asked. “I want to see Poe.”

Doctor Kalonia gave Finn a look that he recognized well from his time with the First Order medics. She would not brook an argument from him, and in the medical bay, her word was law. But he had to try. “If you think you can walk to a bed please do. If not, we will carry you. How do you remove those blasted Stormtrooper pieces off of yourself, young man?”

Finn touched his chest piece. “I can walk,” he said defensively and stood up.

“Slowly,” the doctor shouted, hands reaching out to Finn, who was falling, and falling, and falling. He let Rey carry him to the bed. He helped her take off the plates.

“Finn, right?” the doctor asked.

“Yes,” Finn said, his butt rejoicing at the sensation of soft cushiony bed beneath it. He would close his eyes, he decided, but just for a second.

Poe

The funeral wasn’t quite a grim affair, but Poe wasn’t happy about it either. Mothers weren’t supposed to die. They were supposed to help you grow up. They were supposed to be there. On the one hand, Poe knew that his mother hadn’t left him on purpose, but the fact remained that she was gone forever and she wasn’t coming back.

“How could she do it?” Poe asked his father later.

Kes looked so tired in that moment, Poe would only remember it when he was an adult. His father used to be so carefree, at least as far as you could be when you fought for the rebellion.

“She didn’t do anything,” his father said simply. “The Empire did this to us.”

Poe could feel the tears building, worse than when he’d helped his father cut onions— that had lasted for only a few minutes; worse than when he’d skidded on the ground and scraped his knee
raw— that had lasted for several hours; worse even than when he’d slammed his hand in the front
door— that had lasted for days.

Later, when he had stopped crying his father handed him a ring on a chain. He’d taken it off at the
funeral, thrown it on the ground in anger. She’d always handed it to him before her missions, told
him it was special, that if she wasn’t back for it he should use it for himself. But he hadn’t known,
hadn’t believed that she could ever be telling him the truth. He hadn’t been able to imagine the
pain he felt, the piece of himself that had been carved out with a rusty knife and left on the floor to
rot.

“No,” he said.

“Poe,” his father said, weary of this life as much as Poe was. The anger wasn’t fueling his fire as
much as it did Poe’s, it had already taken too much from him. “Take it. Please. It’s yours.”

“I don’t want it!” he exclaimed.

“You will,” his father said.

“You don’t know that,” Poe said, and he was crying again, ugly tears running down his face as
anger coursed through his veins. He wanted to break something. He wanted to break the ring, to
destroy it, to bring her back.

“I do,” his father said, standing up from where he had been sitting at the table. He had just enough
fight left in him for this. “You know what she always said, Poe. The ring isn’t for you. It’s for the
right person. So you take it and you wear it and you give it to someone just as I gave it to her.”

Then his father strode across the room and wrapped Poe up in a hug, ignoring Poe’s angry fists,
ignoring the tears, ignoring everything but the feeling of his living son clinging to him at the end of
the world.
Finn

“He’s awake.”

Rey.

“How can you tell?”

Jessika.

“I am a Jedi.”

“So fucking what?”

“I have access to the Force? ….I can… sense things? Please, Jessika. You are infuriating.”

“She’s right, she can sense lots of things.”

Rose.

Finn opened his eyes. He had less of a headache now but was still hooked up to the clear bag. “What’s this stuff?” he asked, his tongue heavy and thick in his mouth.

“Finn!” Rose exclaimed, coming within his field of vision. “I’m so glad you’re alive.”

Finn smiled weakly. “Me too… I think.”

He could see Jessika scowling at Rey, but the fighter pilot punched him on the knee. “I’m glad too. And it’s a saline solution, Finn. To keep you hydrated and alive.”

Finn blinked slowly. He vaguely recalled Rey having told him this once before already. But he didn’t quite understand. “What does that mean?”

“It means they’re putting water and salt directly into your blood,” Rey said. “Since you weren’t awake and able to take any in yourself.”

He did understand the concept of hydrated. The First Order made sure that they always drank enough water to remain at peak efficiency. “But why would they put it in my blood?” Finn asked, looking up at the simple, clear bag.

“To keep you alive?” Jessika asked, disgust tingeing the edges of her words and marring her face as her brows connected in a deep scowl.
“But...” Finn said, voice trailing off. *But that’s a waste of resources. But if I can’t contribute I am a waste of space, of air, of food, of water. But Poe needs it more than I do.* He bit back the words on seeing the concern and anger in the girls’ faces.

“But that’s a waste of resources. But if I can’t contribute I am a waste of space, of air, of food, of water. But Poe needs it more than I do.”

“Um. I mean, that’s good,” he tried, looking desperately at Rey whose lips widened not into a smile but in an acknowledgement. She blinked and nodded at him almost imperceptibly and he relaxed on the bed. So that had been the right response. He supposed it made sense.

“Exactly,” Rey said, elbowing Jessika in the side. It looked like she’d done it quite hard too, because Jessica’s mouth fell open in a shocked ‘O’ and she shot Rey a glare. “Very good, Finn. You gave us quite a scare.”

“What?” Finn asked, propping himself up on his elbows. He felt dizzy, grimy, uncomfortable. “I wasn’t even hurt!”

“You were too,” Rey retorted. She leaned forward and jabbed Finn’s upper arm hard.

The pain was so shocking he gasped, staring at his arm. What had happened? It looked like they had cut his sleeve off and bandaged his arm! He could now feel a cool breeze on his skin and wondered why he hadn’t felt it before. It was the same arm as had the IV in it, which was a spot of cold.

Rey sniffed, propping her hands on her hips. “And also you gave away, like. Way too much blood. *Honestly,* Finn.”

“It looked like a nasty little blaster wound,” Jessika piped up. “I got to see it. A bit of a graze but any hit from those nasty things can cause some serious damage.”

“You have to take better care of yourself,” Rose said softly. Her eyes were on Finn’s, dark and knowing in her small face.

Finn looked from Jessika to Rose to Rey. “How come you guys are all over here and not with Poe?” he asked, dreading the answer.

Jessika stepped to the side, revealing a figure across the med bay, separated from this side of the room by clear plastic walls. Finn could see Poe on the bed, surrounded by tubes going in his throat, the clear flexpoly suit and whirring droids. Finn sat up fully, sliding his legs off the bed. He had noticed that his IV was attached to a pole which he should be able to grip…

His legs gave out the second he put any weight on them, almost like after he had recovered from his lightsaber wound. Rey caught him, of course, so strong that she could probably lift him over her head and carry him over to Poe if she felt like it. She didn’t, luckily for his pride: she simply kept her iron grip under his spare arm. He leaned on her for support and she helped him shuffle over to the plastic divider. He could barely see Poe’s face, there was so much obscuring him. He could feel his breath stopping in his throat, feel tears welling behind his eyes.

“He really does have more colour than he did earlier,” Rey said into his ear, which was hard to believe since Poe was about as white as Stormtrooper plastoid.

“I found him!” Bas crowed, the door to the outer hall opening as the dark-skinned pilot pushed his way into the medical bay.

Nobody had time to ask Bas who exactly he had found because an insistent beeping rose from the emergency surgery area. Doctor Kalonia shoved people aside and ducked under the plastic sheeting which Finn could now see was not much more than a curtain separating the room.
“He’s crashing,” a droid shaped almost like a person said, its lit up eyes dimming halfway. “BP dropping, Doctor.”

Doctor Kalonia was consulting the loudly beeping machine as a silvery droid with pincer-like arms snipped the clear material from Poe’s chest before sticking two pads down.

“What’s happening?” he asked, eyes glued to Poe.

“He’s lost too much blood,” the humanoid droid said.

“Someone get the donor pumping. We have one pint left we can use in the meantime...hasn’t he been clotting?” Doctor Kalonia pressed a few buttons and waved a hand at the curtain. “GH-7224, get the masses out of here. GH-71, get the donor’s blood immediately. We need it here. 2-1B I need you on the machine.”

“He has been clotting, but only recently,” the droid Doctor Kalonia had just referred to as 2-1B said as the large, human-shaped GH-7224 droid zoomed towards the plastic curtain. “He may be resisting the artificial bacta, and at least his stitches are holding nicely but–”

As the droid scuttled towards them it pushed them one at a time until everyone was crowding back towards the main door except a dark haired man who was pulling off a brown leather jacket to reveal a black short-sleeved shirt underneath. Finn ducked out from the robot’s arm, desperate to see what was going on. He used the pole with the IV on it to fend off the robot’s grabbing arms and it could only reach for him so much before it would lose the rest of them.

He got away just as the beeps swelled in a crescendo, erratic and unpleasant. A different set of beeps rose beneath the other machine, quieter but no less insistent. “Commence CPR,” said a voice in the same tone as the quieter beeping. Doctor Kalonia leaned over the gurney, two hands on Poe’s chest, moving in a steady rhythm. She breathed hard as she did it, her face a study in concentration.

The robot came back to grab Finn, taking him firmly around the shoulders. He tried to twist away but got nowhere, just managing to see the doctor pause briefly as the machine said: “Stop CPR, do not touch patient. Analysing.”

The last Finn could see was of the doctor hovering above Poe, her hair out of its neat ties, eyes intent on a screen he was unable to see. “Poe!” he shouted desperately.

Before the door clicked shut Finn heard the machine beep quietly, then announce: “Shock advised.”

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**Poe**

The sky above was blue when Poe landed his X-Wing in the lushly forested space behind the farm. He brought her down slow and steady, hitting that faded runway dead on. It wasn’t a challenge anymore, not after the places he had been and things he had seen, but just landing his X-Wing on the strip felt like coming home.

He had his own life now away from this place but it was complicated and messy. His memories of the farm, of his father were magnetic pieces at the core of his very being. It helped him find his centre again. And he could be gone for years at a time, long stretches of being between the stars so
far away that from Yavin 4 they were just sparkling lights in the sky.

“Here we are, buddy,” He said, popping open the cockpit. “Welcome to the family farm.”

He didn’t wait for an answering chirp from BB-8 before pulling off his flight helmet. The mossy breeze brushed past his ears which always got so hot in the helmet. “Come on, BB,” Poe said, frowning when his robot friend didn’t immediately answer. That wasn’t like him. He half-turned to check on his little orange pal when a voice rang through the air.

“Poe?”

Poe froze. He recognized the crystalline voice, had forgotten exactly how it sounded in the thirty odd years since he’d last been able to hear it. But the way she said his name…

“Mom?” he asked, feeling six and four and thirty eight all at once. He walked towards the house, every step lighter than the last until he was running, sprinting into her arms. He was surprised at how much smaller she was than him now, but everything about her was just as he remembered.

“I can’t believe it…what’s going on?” he asked.

His mother held him at arm’s lengths to give him a classic mom once over. “What do you remember about how you got here?”

“What do you mean? I flew here,” Poe said. “You have to come see my ship, Mom. It is so cool, I always thought that if you were still with us you would be so proud…”

Only Shara Bay hadn’t been with them. Not for a long time. “Mom?” he asked, puzzled by the mix of emotions clouding her face. “Where are we?”

She sighed, her shoulders slumping in defeat. “I knew that I was young,” she said. Sorrow filled her voice. “I did not think it would take you so young as well.”

“What, mom?” he asked, taking her hands. They were as he remembered them, with calluses on every fingertip, on the palm, but with deep purple nails so perfectly smooth and clean. You have to take care of your ship, Poe. But more importantly you have to take care of yourself. If you don’t protect your own humanity, how can we ever hope to save the rest of humanity from evil?

Shara put a hand on his face, running her thumb under his eye. “I knew I wouldn’t see you grow up,” she said. “And here you are… you look so much like your father, Poe.”

“Mom, you’re scaring me,” Poe said. Why couldn’t he remember how he had come here? “What’s going on?”

Poe.

Poe.

Poe looked up to the sky, where storm clouds were darkening the once clear sky. Their bellies were heavy with rain, black and grey and angry-looking. He’d thought he’d heard something. The clouds spoke again, a deep and dark growl rumbling through the ground.

“POE!”

A drop of rain hit Poe’s cheek. He blinked hard and ducked his head back to look at his mom. She had dropped the hand from his face but he still held onto her other hand with his own. She had
tears in her eyes or was that just the rain? “Mom, I-- I’m scared.”

“I thought--” Shara said, closing her eyes and lifting her face to the sky almost as though she was relieved. “I thought you might have passed but Poe, your time is not done.”

“What time, mom?” Poe asked, wishing he could curl up in her arms or on her lap, maybe listen to her tell him his favourite stories by the fire as she stroked gentle hands through his curly hair. A pain struck him, almost like his heart was skipping in its usual rhythm. His limbs felt heavy now, like he’d maybe sped upwards at ten Gs, but his feet were firmly on the ground. His chest hurt like someone was pounding on it with a sledgehammer.

“Poe,” his mom said, looking at him, and there it was, the spark of rebelliousness and life he remembered from her time.

Her time…

Before she had…

“Yes, Poe,” she said. “I am gone. But you are not yet. You are being called back, Poe.”

“Mom,” he said, trying to reach for her other hand. It felt like she was pulling away from him though it didn’t look like it. “I don’t want to leave you! I haven’t seen you in so long...” His muscles contracted, twitching madly around something in his chest. He clutched at it, feeling sharp pains everywhere. His throat burned, his eyes were dry, his chest.

“You will see me again,” she said, her eyes kind. “I am so proud of you, Poe. Now go! Live your life, Poe!”

The heavens opened, dumping a heavy deluge of freezing cold rain that drenched Poe’s clothes. His mom, the farm, everything sped away from him faster than the speed of light. When he looked up to the dark clouds above he heard the echo of his name one more time, the anguished voice like a tether he could almost grab hold of.

The sky rumbled again and Poe saw the bolt of lightning as it crackled down from the clouds above. He was frozen to the ground, his legs and feet welded together like panels on a ship. He couldn’t get away, couldn’t even flinch as the lightning struck him, a short, sharp crack.

Poe.

Finn

“Let me back in there!” Finn demanded, casting about for something, anything he could use to convince this mangy robot to let him through the door. The IV pole had already been confiscated, along with the needle in his arm, but the droid was guarding the door with crossed arms and a menacing look on its face.

“Finn.”

“You have to let me back in there,” Finn choked out.

“Finn!” Rey’s hands on his shoulders were firm and insistent. “Look at me!”
Finn chanced a look back and saw the calm in her eyes. He couldn’t understand why they weren’t letting him in to see Poe, why they wouldn’t let him in.

“That’s it,” Rey said, her voice soothing like she was talking to an upset animal. “Why don’t we go get you some food? Did you know they have unlimited food in this place? You don’t have to bring anything to trade for it? You can just eat at any time, as much as you want.”

“And a shower,” Jessika piped up.

“Yes, that always makes me feel better,” Rose said.

“Also he stinks,” Jessika said.

Rose gaped at her and then balled up her face in a scowl and punched Jessika directly on the arm.

“Ow!” Jessika said. “The truth hurts but it’s better than a lie. We have smelling salts to help wake Poe up… we don’t need people stinking so bad that they do it too.”

Right. Sixty hours… probably more considering he had just been unconscious for an unknown amount of time. He rubbed a hand over his chin consideringly, surprised at the length of stubble that scraped at his hand. He’d never had more than a full day’s worth of facial hair growth: the First Order demanded clean-shaven faces to avoid infections or bacterial growth, a simple haircut regularly maintained, and a full shower each morning in lukewarm water, with the most acerbic possible soap to clear away any surface contaminants and coat the skin to avoid excessive sweat.

His hair had grown way longer than regulation requisites and he wasn’t sure how he would even describe how his hair had been cut to anyone short of saying “Like a Stormtrooper, please” and he also didn’t know where on this planet he would even begin to get soap, a razor, clean clothes…?

The three girls must have interpreted his loss of speech correctly because all three of them gave him a look of pity. Well, except Rey, who was still gripping his shoulder tightly and looking as always like she was ready to, as he had once heard Jessika say, cut a bitch.

“Okay, but,” he said, trying to sound like a reasonable person and not someone who had only a few minutes ago tried to stab a droid with an IV needle. “What if something happens to Poe when I’m off…” He waved a hand in the air, trying to gesticulate the words: galavanting about and not sitting by his side.

“Am I or am I not a Jedi Master?” Rey asked.

“Nobody knows, there haven’t been Jedi for years,” Jessika said.

Rey rolled her eyes. “That is of no consequence. Finn, I will feel if anything happens to Poe. And I will bring you back here immediately.”

He could see no lie in her words and he trusted Rey with his life, just like he did Poe and Jessika and Rose and Wright.

Reluctantly, he agreed and was dragged down the hallways and through the motions of retrieving his (his!) rebel clothes and his other rationed bag of supplies from the supplymaster, which the girls excitedly informed him now included an extra and very fresh bar of soap straight from the pine farmers in Yavin 4.

The girls led him to what they explained were the men’s showers, and he should be fine in there but if he needed anything to just holler.
He stood in a long bay of lockers, with a bench running down the middle of the room. He supposed he should put his clothes in one of the lockers although he didn’t own a lock. Hopefully nobody would want to steal his meager clothes and rationed effects.

They weren’t much, but he remembered how he had been forced to revert to his Stormtrooper Neutral expression to avoid breaking down in front of the nice lady (Nien Numb’s wife) who had handed him with no demands in return, the simple kit. It included scissors, razor, toothbrush, soap bar, a bottle of minty liquid that burned his skin but which one of the rebels had informed him was called “Aftershave” and a small bottle of something called ‘shampoo’ which, when he had asked about it, Rose had laughed and told him it was to clean his hair. Imagine that! A soap just for the hair that smelled spicy, just like Poe’s jacket had when Finn had assumed ownership of it.

He’d really only been in Resistance bases for a few weeks but he remembered how they were generally laid out, with incredibly luxurious partitions between shower stalls. They were each like separate rooms, although on Yavin 4 the floor and walls were made of a soft, beige stone that was almost warm and felt like heaven under his bare feet. No cold, emotionless plastoid.

Shaving so much hair from his face was a new experience but when he was done, Finn already felt much better. The water in the showers, too, even hotter on the planet than it could ever get onboard the rebel ships, cleared away his grime and helped his sinuses feel free of the disinfectant smell that he’d carried since being on the Death Star.

The new soap… it was a different consistency from the regular Resistance fare, almost waxy and with little specks mixed in. It smelled divine, like fresh air and blue sky and soft earth. Finn scrubbed himself from head to toe three times until the smell of the soap filled his lungs fully.

Stepping out of the shower he felt almost like he was stepping into a new body. The towels on Yavin 4 were softer than on the rebel ships. Finn hoped they would never have to leave this incredible planet.

Bastian entered the showers just as Finn was finished putting on his clean underwear, clean pants, clean shirt… someone had washed them in his absence. He could tell by the slight scent of lemon coming from the fabric. It was enough to make a man cry.

“Finn!” Bas exclaimed, grinning from ear to ear. “They got you out of the med bay!”

Finn blinked owlishly, surprised by the camaraderie. He’d only flown one mission with Bas and they’d barely even spoken two words to each other the whole time. “Oh. Yeah.”

“Shit, are these from the Stormtrooper clothes?” Bas asked, pointing with a crinkled nose to the neatly folded pile of Finn’s Stormtrooper clothes.

They’d been what he had been wearing during the mission but also before, he’d always kept one piece of them in his outfit at all times. Like he couldn’t quite let go. They’d handed him a different shirt this time but it fit him nicely, a soft grey one, and proper Resistance pants made of tough dark brown, well worn material. They were extremely comfortable and didn’t hug his skin quite as tightly as the Stormtrooper material had.

“Yeah,” Finn said. “How do I get them washed?”

“Dude,” Bas said. “You can throw them out. I mean, if they have sentimental value, I’m sure you can get someone to clean them for you, but we have lots of shit. And we’re on a planet base now, there’ll be new clothes to be had outside!”
“But shouldn’t they be repurposed?” Finn asked, puzzled.

“Fuck no,” Bas said. “That sounds like some First Order bullshit there, Finn. I’m all about recycling, but when your shit’s all cut up and rank as hell… well, you gotta learn how to let go of some things, you know?”

“I guess,” Finn said. “But how would I get these other clothes?”

“General Organa pays out credits for work done, whether it’s assigned on-base or off,” Bas said. “Didn’t anybody tell you that?”

“Uh, no,” Finn said.

“What?!” Bas crowed. He slapped Finn on the back and laughed uproariously. Finn gripped the jacket Poe had given him tightly in his hands, wondering why what he’d said was so funny. “All this time you were just helping us out of the goodness of your heart?”

“Well,” Finn said, defensively putting on his jacket. He bundled up his little kit and tucked it under his arm. “I mean, isn’t it the right thing to do?”

“I’m sorry,” Bas said, wiping his eyes. “It’s not funny. I just can’t believe you didn’t think you were going to get paid. Come on, the girls sent me in here to get you so we could grab a bite. You can check your credit balance later.” He shook his head, a grin on his face as he scooped up the Stormtrooper outfit and deposited it in the trash. “Finn the good-hearted. Shit.”

Finn couldn’t stop staring at Rey as they got food, a little shocked at how highly she packed her plate with food, even more shocked when she actually ate it all like a starving street orphan. He supposed that’s exactly what she was. He had to take less food than he usually because not only was his stomach still protesting his having donated so much blood, but the food that the rebels ate was so flavourful. He found he could only eat half of what he used to, but whenever he felt even a little bit hungry he’d been told to find one of the cooks, as they always had snacks handy. One of them had even given him, on a few nights, some small, sweet biscuits that she said were perfect for growing boys who needed to eat the whole night through.

When they were finished eating, most of the Resistance fighters split off, Jessika giving Rey a dark look that Finn couldn’t interpret and Bastian giving Finn a friendly clasp on the shoulder. Rose stayed behind, silently looking at her plate until Jessika and Bas had both gone.

“Finn, can I talk to you?” she asked quietly.

“Oh, sure,” Finn said, eyeing the two biscuits left on Rey’s plate. She was smacking her lips delightedly, a truly ravenous eater. And she never seemed to get any larger? Finn didn’t understand the mechanics of her body. Maybe she wasn’t quite human.

“Um, alone?” Rose asked.

“Alone?” Finn asked, confused. What was there to say to him that couldn’t be said in front of Rey?

Rey stuffed one of the biscuits in her mouth and turned her face towards Rose. “I’ll give you two some space,” she said, spitting out bits of biscuit as she spoke. “Finn, I’ll just be outside. Don’t touch that, I’m bringing it with me.” This in reference to the second biscuit which he had been just about to snatch.

Oh well. He knew where he could get more.
When Rey left, Finn waited for Rose to speak up. She poked around at the scraps left on her plate before she cleared her throat and looked at him. Her eyes were sad. “I know we didn’t discuss anything before, and it was only a kiss, but, I mean. Were you and Rey always… I mean, you could have said something.”

Finn felt like he was probably making the world’s stupidest face. “Huh?”

“What I’m trying to say,” Rose said, with a huff, “Is were you and Rey together before you and I went to Canto Bight?”

“Together how?” Finn asked. These Resistance fighters sure didn’t like to speak their minds. It could be infuriating sometimes.

“Like, in a relationship,” Rose said.


Rose waited, eyebrows raised expectantly.

Finn raised a finger. “I definitely know what that is,” he offered. “So I can answer your question. And the answer is…?”

Rose closed her eyes. “Do you not know what a relationship is?”

Here’s where it got confusing, Finn thought. The Resistance fighter saying something that meant something but also another completely different thing. “Yes,” he said. “A relationship is between two or more people. It’s the connection between them. Two people… can be friends. That is a relationship. Or you can have a superior officer and then soldiers,” he offered. Those were relationships. Right?

“No, not like that,” Rose said. “Do you like Rey?”

“I like Rey,” Finn said, squinting a bit in concentration. Nope. That was the wrong answer. Rose looked upset.

“Do you like her?” she asked.

“Hmm,” Finn said, nodding. What was he going to say to make Rose feel better? He’d said the wrong thing already about ten times in a row here. “Hmmmmm.”

Rose covered her face with her hands. Finn could see that the tips of her ears were turning a bright pink. “Come on, Finn.”

“Okay. Here’s the thing. I’ll give it to you straight. Full disclosure, here,” Finn said. “I don’t understand what you are trying to ask me?”

“If you and Rey are together,” Rose said.

“Yes, but in what way?” Finn asked. This didn’t seem to him to be a totally unreasonable request.

“Romantically? Sexually?” Rose asked.

Finn tapped the table nervously. These were things that the First Order had expressly forbidden. Hell, they’d even outlawed the words. He vaguely knew of these things. Romance was when a man and a woman gave each other flowers, probably. Or other gifts. He’d heard stories from some of the older Troopers who’d been on more missions. They’d even told tales of when they’d done
some raids, of how they’d found people in … positions. That had been exciting enough, as a young thing with an awful lot of things going on his mind.

“Rey?” he asked, shocked at the question. “And me?”

“Yes,” Rose asked.

What would he even do with Rey? Sure, she was the right person to have around if you needed someone to lean on, or carry you somewhere, or fly a crazy pile of junk, or speak every language known to man. But what would he do with her? “Like, kissing?” Finn asked, mildly horrified at this thought. Rey would probably punch him if he tried something like that. *In the private bits.*

“Okay, so you’re not,” Rose said. “Then why do you keep looking at her?”

“She said she was keeping an eye on Poe…” Finn said, trailing off when he saw Rose’s face fall again. What had he said now? He just couldn’t win here!

“So you and Poe then,” Rose said. Finn huffed. “Me and Poe what?” he asked. “Please be more clear when you ask me these confusing questions.”

Rose snorted, but it was a bit sad. “You and Poe,” she said, putting both index fingers and thumbs together in an almost pensive motion. “Kissing?”


Finn licked his lips nervously. Suddenly he needed water, his throat was so dry. “Uh, who told you that?”

“You, dummy,” she said. “Just now.”

“I didn’t say anything,” Finn said.

“It’s fine, Finn,” Rose said.

“No it’s not, look at how upset you are!” Finn exclaimed. “And I did that to you!”

“You didn’t do anything,” Rose said.

“Well, except kiss Poe,” Finn said, and then clapped a hand over his mouth. The image of the closet flashed in his mind, with Poe pinned in front of him, eyes dark and hungry. Finn swallowed. He wasn’t sure if it was— okay? For two men to be doing something like that. He wasn’t sure if Poe wanted it, it wasn’t like they’d talked about that closet since. And he especially didn’t know if Poe wanted him telling anyone about it. “Shit.”

This time when Rose snorted, she looked faintly amused. “I won’t tell anyone but I will warn you that everyone already thinks that you two are… together.”

“What?!” Finn yelped, a bit too loudly. Some of the Resistance fighters still in the room turned to stare at them. “Sorry,” he said, careful to control the volume of his voice. “What?”

“It’s so obvious you love him,” Rose said. “And Rey, but I didn’t know you didn’t feel that way towards her.”

“She’s got a lot of things on her mind,” Finn said. “She wouldn’t have time for me even if either of
us did want that.”

Rose leaned in. “Well, since you kissed me, I think I have the right to know how kissing Poe Dameron was.”

“Oh,” Finn said. He picked up his water glass and swallowed desperately against the dryness in his mouth. “I mean.”

Rey appeared in the doorway to the mess hall, waving frantically. Saved by the Rey, thank the Force. “Hey, we have to go,” Finn said. “I have to go. You can come. With me, I mean. I like you, you know that right?”

“Go.” Rose rolled her eyes.

“Thanks,” Finn said, grateful. He had so many friends here? Not just comrades but friends. He scooped up Rey’s plate (she never cleaned up after herself) and deposited them in the appropriate receptacle before hurrying out after Rey. He looked over his shoulder before he left and gave Rose a little wave and a smile. She waved back and Finn breathed back a sigh of relief.

It really felt like he’d screwed up their friendship there. Maybe he had. That was all a part of this whole freedom concept unfortunately.

“Is he okay?” Finn asked, trying to appear Composed.

“I think he is still alive,” Rey said, not at all reassuringly. Her eyes were focused on some distant point in front of them. “The General would like a word with you.”

“Oh,” Finn said.

Great. Another woman for him to disappoint, probably.

Poe

Poe could feel the tendrils of Kylo Ren’s mind probing his from far away. He kept trying to do what he hoped would keep the man out.

There’s no place like home. There’s no place like home. Coruscant, before the war. Flying through the air streams, slow through traffic. Traffic, so frustrating. Bumper to bumper. Alone in the cockpit, nobody else there. Flying, hands on the throttle, through the skies, through space, through time itself. He was the best pilot in the Resistance if not the galaxy. He could fly forever.

His head was sticky with blood from where two officers had hit him way too hard, probably matting his hair on the side. His lip was bleeding from when he’d smacked it on the sides of the torture chair they’d strapped him into to keep him from shouting. They’d hit every part of his body that they could reach, trying to bruise him until he broke. He would really feel the bruises later when he was safely back with the Resistance in– shit.

Flying, flying, as fast as you can. You can’t catch me, I’m the Gingerbread man.

“I had no idea we had the best pilot in the Resistance onboard,” Kylo Ren said from across the room, his voice coming out distorted from the absolutely ridiculous mask he wore. He didn’t need
to pretend here: Poe knew exactly who he was. He had heard the rumours and the stories and he knew just which ones to believe from seeing the pain on Leia’s face whenever her son was mentioned.

Kylo stepped forward. “Comfortable?”

“Not really,” Poe said, managing to keep his voice flippant. He couldn’t make any rude gestures, strapped down as he was, so he made do with what he had.

“I’m impressed.” Kylo continued to advance in what he probably thought was a really menacing way. Poe just found it overdramatic. “No one has been able to get out of you what you did with the map.”

Why Kylo Ren of all people needed a map to where Luke Skywalker was when he was probably one of the only people who had ever actually been with Luke Skywalker was beyond Poe. “Might wanna rethink your technique,” Poe said. He wished he could spit on Kylo’s boots, just to piss him off, but the angle of the stupid table he was strapped to was just all wrong for that.

Poe didn’t regret many things, but asking Kylo Ren to invade his mind would later top out his mental list as being one of his poorer decisions. The guy held out his hand in the cheesiest pose like he was trying to zap something unseen into Poe’s head.

Unfortunately it didn’t feel cheesy. It felt like Kylo Ren was inside his skull, cleaving at the very walls of his mind with his horribly pretentious three-pointed lightsaber.

Yes, Poe heard in his mind as he saw the lightsaber come down hard. You will scream for me.

Poe tried to focus his mind on flight, his mother, the sky, anything. He was desperate and every nerve flared to life, blaring warnings in his brain that they were on fire, all of them, every single nerve ending howling in pain. Kylo struck again, pulling so hard at Poe’s mind that Poe couldn’t breathe properly, and then he pushed, and Poe’s every muscle forced him back in the table against his will so hard that he actually saw stars when his head connected with the table frame.

Just like being in the cockpit of his X-Wing.

“Where is it?” Kylo asked, pushing so hard he forced all of the air out of Poe’s lungs.

Poe struggled to pull air back into his lungs, his mind as focused as he could get it. “The Resistance,” he panted, every word becoming ten additional pounds of weight added to his chest. “Will not be intimidated by you.”

He didn’t regret saying that: there was nothing he could do to stop Kylo Ren and there was no way he would give up any information willingly. Kylo must just have been fuming behind his stupid mask because he twisted his hand in a way that made Poe’s body tug forward, the restraints barely holding him in place. Poe tried to pull back but couldn’t do anything, just feel the cuffs biting into his wrists and ankles, drawing blood and leaving bruises behind that would last for weeks.

“Where. Is it?” Kylo asked, and Poe wondered at just how badly he had underestimated the guy’s control of the Force. Kylo squeezed Poe so hard that it felt like he was falling down a flight of stairs only the stairs had no bottom. He drew together his brows, trying hard to focus on the image of his X-Wing and screamed.

He didn’t even know that he had passed out until he woke up, with Kylo Ren nowhere to be seen. He knew, deep in his heart, that the bastard must have gotten the information from him once he’d become unconscious. His insides felt like they had been torn to shreds with a cheese grater. It took
him a full five minutes to remember how to squeeze his hand into a fist. He slowly regained control of his limbs after that but the sickening feeling inside his brain wouldn’t leave him, that feeling of being naked, helpless, sweating and alone.

He couldn’t even lift his head off the table when a Stormtrooper tromped into the room and announced that Ren wanted to see him.

He’d always imagined himself going down in a literal blaze of glory, at the centre of an explosive fireball, possibly after having directly collided with an Imperial Cruiser holding Hux, Ren and whichever other dirtbag motherfuckers were running this fascist shitshow.

But here he was, a traitor to the Resistance, to his poor BB-8. And he was going to be marched off to be executed. He wasn’t useful any longer since they already had all the information they needed from him. He swallowed his pride and made sure to march at the same speed as the Stormtrooper, making sure the guy didn’t have any opportunities to tug him along. If he was going to his death, he’d have his head held up as fucking high as he could.

Then the Stormtrooper pushed him into a little gap in the wall, not even a room so much as a strange closet. Probably to hold mops and shit.

“Listen carefully. If you do exactly as I say, I can get you out of here.”

“What?” Poe asked.

The Stormtrooper put down its gun— it put down its motherfucking gun and took off its helmet. Its helmet.

And it wasn’t an it, or a thing, or a soldier, but a young man probably five or ten years younger than Poe. Sweat glistened on his dark brown skin and in his eyes Poe saw something… not a spark: more like a forest fire. But the young man was afraid too, Poe could feel the fear in the air, fear of being caught? Of going against orders? From what he knew of Stormtroopers they were supposed to be essentially brainwashed into being mindless killing machines.

“This is a rescue,” the man said. And in that moment, Poe wasn’t sure he had ever seen anyone more beautiful in his entire life. That spark of hope that had kept him fighting all of these years had just about gone out after Kylo Ren had taken control of his mind but here, in this small supply closet, this man was offering Poe the chance of a lifetime.

Not only could he escape from a First Order ship where he’d been kidnapped… but he could take a clear-headed Stormtrooper with him. What a blow that would be, to the First Order’s precious training and whatever the fuck else they were always going on about in the chatter the Resistance picked up.

“I’m helping you escape!” the man said. “Can you fly a TIE Fighter?”

Poe stared at the mouth that had spoken those precious words. “You’re with the Resistance?”

“What?” the man asked, scrunching his face into a ball of confused lines. “No, no, no, no. I’m breaking you out. Can you FLY a TIE Fighter?”

“I can fly anything,” Poe said, searching the dark eyes for the truth he was sure he had seen: that this Stormtrooper was of sound mind and body and did not belong in this maze of black and white. “What, what. Why?”

The Stormtrooper grinned, a smile so big it split his face in two. The light in his eyes changed from
burning to a simmer but there was an excitement in them, like Poe really could fly anything. Or do anything. Or be anything.

“Why are you helping me?” Poe asked, running scenarios and following his Standard Operating Procedures when speaking with would-be-rebels. Three separate checks got a pass in his books. He was sure the General had more complicated ways of deciding if people were genuine but Poe only had his gut.

And his gut was telling him that this man was going to change his life.

“Because it’s the right thing to do.”
Out of the Dark

Chapter Notes

No chapter warnings.

Finn

General Organa stood at her usual spot at the command center, eyes tracking bits of puzzles that Finn couldn’t even begin to see the outlines of. Her eyes were narrowed at the screens, and even though she was older and had wrinkles and grey hair, she exuded that same iron-hot spark of life that Finn had so often witnessed in Poe. It was in the very fibre of her being down to the point that Finn wondered if she had grown up in the rebellion like Poe had.

“Finn,” she said and turned her attention towards him and Rey. The look in her eyes, below her raised brows was loaded with questions.

“General,” he said, unsure whether he should bow or not.

“You should not,” General Organa said. Finn frowned. “What I mean to say is: you should only bow to yourself, Finn. Not other people. Nobody knows what you really want except for you and that’s something you have to keep at the front of your mind at all times.”

Still a bit shocked about the mind-reading—“I didn’t read your mind, Finn. Rey is making hand motions behind your back.”

Finn scowled at Rey who gave him an angelic smile that told him she had never done anything wrong, ever. “Well, alright then.”

“So how is Poe?” General Organa asked.

Finn shrugged. “I don’t know. I haven’t seen him in hours.”

“It was only the one hour,” Rey muttered, with an unnecessarily exaggerated eye roll.

“Why would you ask me anyway?” Finn asked.

General Organa gave him one of those classic enigmatic looks that Finn so hated. “No reason. I didn’t ask for you to come here to talk about Poe, although I don’t mind the subject. I asked you to come here because I want your opinion on the plans you brought back.”

She pressed a few buttons and a three dimensional hologram of the Death Star came to life in the centre of the room. “We have reconstructed this from the data you gave us. But I would like to hear a first-hand account of what you experienced before we proceed any further.”

“It was just like all of the other First Order ships,” Finn said. “Pretty standard, really. Quadruple-hulled, with a reactor core protected by external and internal shields. They aren’t powering it from a moon but from the gravitational pull of a nearby star.”

He noticed one rebel scribbling furious notes on a pad and clasped his hands behind his back. “Uh,
I mean. You know, really nothing unusual there. There’s manual overrides for everything at the master level, your regulation trackers and homing beacons, computerized troop holdings.”

The rebel scribbling wrote faster somehow and then looked up at Finn as though urging him to continue, blue eyes focused on him. In fact, everyone in the room was staring at him with an interest that was too keen for his comfort. General Organa snapped once which caught his attention. “Finn. Look at me and keep talking. If you can’t focus because they are making you too uncomfortable I will ask them to leave.”

Discomfort had never stopped him from delivering a full report before. “No, ma’am. I’m fine,” he said, remembering all of the times he had lied on reports to cover for Troopers standing around him in a circle with their black eye masks focused on him. “I’ll keep going. But it was really like all of the other ships they build, which is a bit sloppy in my opinion. You know, making it identical…. I’m not sure if they hired the same architect but I would assume so. It almost reminds me of the first Death Star’s plans, a bit like the second but really nothing new there. Maybe they can’t get anyone else to design starkillers for them anymore? So, yeah. All pretty normal stuff.”

“‘The thing is, Finn,” General Organa said, “we really don’t know enough about the First Order ships. We have questioned some of their ship builders but most have been either unwilling or unable to release plans to us. This is all truly brand new information for us. So why don’t you start with these regulation trackers you mentioned?”

After the debriefing, which didn’t last as long as Finn had thought it would based on the amount of information he was bringing back to the Resistance, General Organa had turned to one of the fighters. “Cobel, would you bring Finn back to the medical bay? He has suffered a great ordeal and I’m sure Doctor Kalonia will come in here herself with a scalpel to get us to bring him back there if we don’t take the initiative.”

She gave Finn a bit of a sly look which included a subtle wink and a quirk at the corners of her lips. He wasn’t sure how to interpret it but it did make him blush hotly. The light-skinned human Cobel was kind enough not to make any comments to Finn but led him directly to the medical bay.

Doctor Kalonia was waiting there, with folded arms and a very stern expression on her face. For some reason, Kylo Ren trying to bully Finn with his incredible magic prowess was less scary than the doctor as he entered the med bay.

“Whatever spirit possessed you to leave here in that condition, Finn, you won’t do it again.”

“Sorry,” Finn said. “The droid kicked me out!”

“And if you had been resting like instructed, you would not have encountered this problem.”

Well, he couldn’t argue with her on that one. She clearly didn’t expect him to either, just made him take off his jacket before she instructed him to sit down.

“Excuse me, sorry, ma’am,” Finn said, flinching away in case he was going to be struck or yelled at. “Can’t I just see Poe first? I’ll be quick! I promise.”

The doctor pursed her lips. “How is your head?”

“My head?” Finn asked. “It’s fine.”

“Hmm,” Doctor Kalonia said. “Rate your pain from one to ten and don’t you lie, you’re not a Stormtrooper any more.”
“Oh no, ma’am,” Finn rushed, hands up hopefully in a placating gesture. “It’s not more than a six. Really, I’m fine.” Six was a non-issue. Six was go back to work immediately without complaint, maybe with some pain medication if you were lucky. It wasn’t until you hit a seven or an eight that you were supposed to report to medical and even then if you did you might be retired, so Troopers didn’t usually end up going until they fell over or something.

Although maybe that wasn’t how the rebels did things.

Doctor Kalonia confirmed this when she closed her eyes and pinched the bridge of her nose. “Fine. You will sit in the chair next to his bed and you will not touch any of the machines. Or the flexpoly. We don’t have any more bacta suits after this one until we can get some flown in and the tanks aren’t finished filling so we can’t even transfer Poe into one of those.”

“Oh, okay,” Finn said.

“And you will not leave until I clear you,” Doctor Kalonia said. “I won’t have a repeat of a few weeks ago with you coming out of bacta sleep and right into the hanger bay.”

“No, ma’am,” Finn said. Really, why would he leave anyway? Rey was here, on the base, safe. She would come to find him at some point, he was sure. And Poe was here so there wasn’t any reason for him to leave until the doctors told him he should. Or until the morning, if they were having another Resistance meeting.

She led him to a very comfortable-looking chair which Finn sat in as instructed. He laid the jacket Poe had given him across his lap and tried not to look at the multitude of tubes going into Poe’s mouth and the bacta suit with its confining shoulder piece, wrist cuffs and strange underwear-like plastoid groin cover.

“How is he, really?” Finn asked the doctor as she prepared to insert another IV into his arm. At least this time she used his other arm.

She was silent as she expertly stabbed him, checked the bag of fluids and then hung it next to a dark red bag of blood going into Poe. “He is stable,” she said after a beat. “I cannot offer you any prognosis. It’s up to him to pull through now, although we are looking for other blood donors to help replace our supplies across the planet. The human settlements here are small but we have many non-human members of the Resistance and truly we have some slack to pick up in this regard. Your Stormtrooper friend helped give Poe some blood.”

“That’s good,” Finn said. It was so warm in this room, he thought. Very cozy. “Did you say– the Stormtrooper we brought in with us?”

“Yes,” Doctor Kalonia confirmed. She was checking something on a chart against the machines beeping overhead. “He was very willing.”

Finn didn’t know what to make of that. The doctor eyed him and procured a small pillow from somewhere. Finn put it behind his head. It would make him more comfortable while he waited fully awakely for the doctor to release him, although he didn’t really know where he would go after.

“Would you like a blanket?” she asked after a moment, but Finn was already fast asleep.
Poe

Finn, smiling bright when he heard that Poe could fly anything.

Finn: “Yeah, Finn. Yeah, I like that!”

Finn, at the centre of the explosion? When the dreadnought split in two after Holdo rammed her ship through the middle?

Finn, voice bursting with static over the transmission waves, miraculously alive.

Finn, determined to give up his life to save the entire rebellion as he barrelled head-first towards the portable Death Ray on Crait. The pain in Poe’s chest when he gripped his mother’s ring tight and wished he hadn’t been so stupid as to give his heart away. The pain in his chest when he saw Finn dragging Rose away from the wreckage, saved, alive, with eyes only for her.

Finn, wearing his jacket, Poe’s jacket on D’Qar, alive and well and so goddamn smoking hot in it, so much better looking than Poe could ever hope to be.

Finn, unconscious, stabbed through by Kylo Ren, that dirty fucking bastard.

Finn in the closet on the Death Star, eyes searching Poe’s as Poe tried so desperately to hold himself back.

Finn kissing him.

Finn kissing Rose.

Finn.

Finn

Finn woke with a start. His neck felt sore but his head felt a lot better than it had earlier, and he wasn’t as nauseated as he had been. He relaxed a bit when he saw that Poe was still in the bed, and didn’t have the many tubes coming out of his mouth. He didn’t look great and was still in the flexpoly suit, but at least he was almost a regular shade of human.

“Who are you?”

Finn jumped in his seat at the voice which came from across Poe’s bed. It was the older gentleman who he’d seen the other day being brought in as a blood donor for Poe. The one with dark hair, dark eyes and generously tanned skin. “Me?” Finn asked. “I’m Finn. Who are you?”

“I’m Kes,” the man said. “Poe’s father.”

Ah. That explained the resemblance between the two and also why he had been brought in as a blood donor if what Rey had informed him she’d learned about ‘blood types’ was to be believed. “Nice to meet you,” Finn said. “When did they take out the tubes?”

“Only an hour or so ago,” Kes said. Was that weird? Should Finn call him Mr. Dameron? The man was certainly giving him a strange look, and it couldn’t be because Finn was calling him Kes in his mind, was it?
“That’s good, isn’t it?” Finn asked.

“I hope so,” Kes said. “You two gave us quite the scare.”

The silence was: awkward.

Finn cleared his throat. “So is there… I mean, do you have any other kids?” How awkward a question. He couldn’t have asked anything else like maybe how was the weather outside?

Kes shook his head. “Just Poe. Did you bring his jacket for him, Finn?”

Finn looked down at his makeshift blanket. He felt possessive of the jacket: it was his. It was the only thing he had that he felt really helped define him as a person, as Finn, not just a former Stormtrooper or current rebel. “Uh, no. It’s mine…” he said, trailing off when Kes shot him a very strange look indeed. “I mean. It used to be Poe’s, but he gave it to me after we crashed in the desert and I thought he was dead. I tried to give it back to him later but he said…”

*It looks good on you.*

“I mean, if he wanted it back, you know, I wouldn’t have kept it. But then I was unconscious because of Kylo Ren and the lightsaber and he stitched it up in the back and let me keep it still so, I don’t know,” Finn said lamely. “I guess he wants me to have it.”

Kes didn’t say anything. He simply continued to stare at Finn, his dark eyes unreadable.

“You know what? I can probably go,” Finn said. “Leave you with him. The doctor pulled out my IV so I’m probably fine.”

Kes raised an eyebrow and for some reason Finn felt his cheeks catch fire. He was blushing again. “Sorry for disturbing you,” Finn said, standing.

“You didn’t,” Kes said. He stood as well and extended a hand across Poe’s body.

Finn hesitated. Did he want the jacket, even after Finn’s confusing explanation? He held it out, but Kes shook his head. “Grab my hand, son. It’s a regular human ritual. I promise I won’t bite.”

The man looked amused now so Finn quickly reached over to take Kes’s hand. “Now shake,” Kes said, and jerked Finn’s hand gently up and down. “And let go. That’s a handshake.”

“Ah,” Finn said, completely unsure of the purpose of this “handshake”. “I totally understand.”

Kes laughed at that, a deep sound coming from somewhere light and happy within. “You must be the Stormtrooper,” he said, his eyes crinkled at the edges with delight.

“Not a Stormtrooper,” came a dry croak from the bed.

Both Kes and Finn turned at that, to see Poe’s face creasing in frustration as he attempted to lever himself up on the bed.

“Poe,” Finn said. “Don’t do that, you’ll hurt yourself! Or tear the suit! I should know, I ripped mine by doing that.”

Poe ignored him of course, but when he finally reached a hand out for help, Finn grabbed it and helped him sit up a little. Kes had some sort of remote in his hand which he used to move the bed beneath Poe so he wouldn’t have to strain himself.
“What were you saying, Poe?” Kes asked, once the two of them got Poe propped up with enough pillows to settle himself.

“He’s not a Stormtrooper,” Poe said wearily.

“Ah,” Kes said. He gave Finn a bit of a guilty look. “Sorry, son. I misspoke.”

“Oh,” Finn said, like hearing he reminded someone of a Stormtrooper didn’t stab him right in the heart. He could feel his ears burning. “That’s alright.”

“He’s just being nice, dad,” Poe croaked accusingly.

“I know that,” Kes said softly, handing his son a glass of water. Finn wished he’d thought of that. He’d been terribly thirsty after he’d woken up from his bacta sleep, how come he hadn’t remembered that?

“Thanks,” Poe said. “So how bad is it?”

“How bad is what?” Finn asked.

Poe waved a hand in a little swirl. “The situation. I mean, Ren got the helmet and knew we were after the plans for the Death Star, right? Did he find out about the other missions?”


“Oh,” Finn said, ignoring Kes. He recalled now that Poe’s last words to him had been something along those lines and he had passed out before Finn had been able to give him an update. “Right. Ren didn’t get the helmet. And it’s Death Stars plural, sir.”

Poe closed his eyes. “He did, I saw him.”

“You saw him get a helmet,” Finn said.

When Poe’s eyes opened they were cautiously hopeful. “I thought you said it was too gross to put on someone else’s helmet. You didn’t.”

Finn beamed. “I did. I remembered what you said about me going down to the surface with our precious plans and so I borrowed one off someone who no longer needed it.”

Poe rested back on the pillows. He took Finn’s hand in one of his and covered his eyes with the other. He looked like he might cry, or maybe he was just in pain and Finn wasn’t sure which was worse. “Thank you,” he whispered, squeezing Finn’s hand as he dropped his other to the bacta suit. The muscles around his eyes and mouth relaxed and Finn was sure he had just fallen asleep.

But he was still holding Finn’s hand.

Finn sat down, unwilling to let go just yet. Poe was alive, thank the many heavens.

“You let him believe he’d failed a mission this big?” Kes asked. “That’s awfully devious, Finn.”

“Well I didn’t do it on purpose,” Finn muttered. “He passed out after communicating that he didn’t understand the situation fully and couldn’t hear me explaining it to him.”

He’d only been awake for a few minutes really, but Finn felt sleep pulling at him as well. With his hand in Poe’s, he settled his head next to Poe’s leg on the bed and let his eyes fall shut.
Poe was alive.

Poe

Poe was in pain.

The very first moment he regained consciousness he had choked on something awful in his throat. His back had arched as he panicked, trying to get away from the obstruction. There were hands on him, holding him down. He thought he might be able to hear voices but the fact remained that the sensation was too like Kylo Ren clawing through his brain for Poe to calm down.

They removed the tube but with an agonizing slowness. Every second was Kylo Ren squeezing his throat and pulling his words out from the bottom of his lungs until finally, finally there was a blessed lack of pressure in his throat. Unfortunately he immediately had to turn to the side to heave. Nothing came up but a bit of bile, but the effort was so taxing that when Poe collapsed back he had just enough time to open his bleary eyes wide enough to see his dad flanked by Doctor Kalonia to his left and to his right, fast asleep in a chair and hooked up to an IV, Finn.

He woke up for the second time more slowly, this time conscious of some pains in his chest and shoulder. It also felt like he might be floating on top of a bacta tank. Having been injured more than a few times in the course of his stint with the Resistance, Poe recognized the feeling as the heady dizziness of pain medication combined with one of the artificial bacta suits.

He tried to move his tongue around his dry mouth, wondering if there was any sand left in the desert or if it was all inside his mouth.

His eyelids felt heavy, like he shouldn’t probably open them but he could also hear familiar voices buzzing around his floating shell of a body. One was easy to pinpoint into clarity: his father, with the practiced quiet of someone who had been in medical bays a few times too often for his liking. The other, deep and soft, had to belong to…

Poe cracked his eyes into slits, squinting hard against the bright lights above. There, standing over him and bizarrely shaking hands, were his father and Finn. Poe would have let himself fall back into sleep but his father’s voice forced Poe’s brain to send him just enough alertness to try push himself to his elbows and speak.

“He’s not a Stormtrooper.”

He barely recognized his own voice, it was so dry and disused. How long could he have been out? Weeks? And just how bad was the state of the galaxy when his father had been flown out to their Resistance base?

His dad offered some sort of apology which Finn was kind enough to accept. If Poe had the strength he would have rolled his eyes. “He’s just being nice, Dad,” he muttered. After a bit of a struggle he accepted that he wasn’t going to be able to sit up by himself and accepted Finn’s hand for help.

Finn’s hand was so warm compared to his own and Poe hung on for dear life as best as he could around the various finger monitors they had on him.

“Thanks,” he said, trying to search Finn’s face to gauge the situation at hand. “So how bad is it?”
“How bad is what?” Finn asked, mind clearly occupied with tucking pillows around Poe and pulling blankets over him.

“The situation,” Poe said, trying to retain his Commander Cool. He wasn’t as high in the Resistance as he had been before but he was still in a position of some command and as such needed to be up to date on their current circumstances. “I mean, Ren got the helmet and knew we were after the plans for the Death Star, right? Did he find out about the other missions?”

That was his greatest fear. That not only did the First Order have multiple Death Stars, but that they had already eliminated the Resistance fighters sent to perform reconnaissance they didn’t have a frog’s chance in hell. That was a saying, wasn’t it?

“Oh,” Finn said, at the same time as his dad, exclaiming about the horror of the Death Stars. “Right. Ren didn’t get the helmet.”

Poe closed his eyes. It was very kind of Finn to try and spare his feelings but he was an adult. And he’d been the one that Kylo Ren had yet again pulled information out of. He at least hoped he had simply informed Kylo Ren that the helmet was of importance but not why, but if they examined it… well, they really wouldn’t have a frog’s chance in hell then. “He did. I saw him.”

“You saw him get a helmet,” Finn said.

No way. He looked at Finn, who was clearly struggling to hold back a smile. “I thought you said it was too gross to put on someone else’s helmet. You didn’t.”

Finn beamed at Poe like the sky parting for the sun. “I did. I remembered what you said, about me going down to the surface with our precious plans and so I borrowed one off someone who no longer needed it.”

That was about as much excitement as Poe could take. “Thank you,” he whispered. He reached for Finn’s hand, needing the reassuring warmth of it as sleep pulled him back under.

The third time Poe woke, he was alone. Well, there was a GH-7 unit hovering nearby which came over to his bedside to check his vitals, but his father and Finn had both gone. He felt marginally more alert but more in pain, which meant they were either decreasing his meds or they weren’t able to combat the pain as effectively any longer.

He had to talk to the General, had to find out what was going on. Just as he tried to sit up and swing his legs over the edge of the bed however, he was greeted by a classic Doctor Kalonia scowl.

“Oh no you don’t,” she snapped. “You may not get up. You might pull out your stitches and are expressly forbidden from leaving this medical bay, Poe Dameron.”

How did she always know? It was like she could read his mind almost as well as General Organa could. “I have to –”

“You have to do nothing but rest and recover,” Doctor Kalonia instructed. “There are other commanders and other pilots to pick up the slack while you are doing so. But there is only one Poe Dameron, young man, and you will not remove him from our lives with such a selfish act of foolishness.”

She had him there. “What happened to me, doc? It feels like I got run over by a dreadnought.”

“You were ‘run over’,” Doctor Kalonia said, “by me. Your heart stopped very briefly after a period of being arrhythmic and we were forced to resuscitate you. You have at least three broken ribs and
two fractures healing in your chest in addition to the blaster wound in your shoulder which was very messy to deal with and caused you to lose a significant amount of blood.”

Poe winced. Oops. He knew why she was phrasing it like that. Resistance fighters were all required to donate their own blood at regular intervals and especially a few days before a big mission. Poe had shown up for his last scheduled appointment but had been informed by the stern doctor that they were clean out of his blood and he needed (needed) to show up in two weeks time to give again so that he would at least have a mediocre supply on their transports.

And since he was sure that one of the ships that had been blown up by the First Order during their escape to Crait had contained a large number of their medical supplies…

“Is that why you flew my dad out here?” he asked, trying not to meet the doctor’s disappointed gaze.

“Flew?” Doctor Kalonia asked, as though Poe were not simply a fool for neglecting his self-care duties but for even asking the question.

“Well, yeah,” Poe said. “Weren’t we headed to the Reginard base? How did you get my dad here so quickly?”

“We were forced to reroute our course due to being briefly pursued by the First Order through the Outer Rim, and General Organa decided on an emergency landing on Yavin 4. So your father was able to walk over from his house, or perhaps he ran.” Doctor Kalonia shrugged almost imperceptibly. “Either way he arrived in time to provide you with a full pint of blood, still necessary after what Finn and that Stormtrooper prisoner he brought gave to you.”

“What?” Poe asked.

Doctor Kalonia shrugged. “We asked if he would give us a small donation of blood and he consented. I’m not sure what Finn said to convince him but he was willing enough.”

Leave it to Finn to convince a prisoner of war to willingly donate blood. The doctor checked something on the machine, one hand lightly on his wrist to confirm the monitor’s readouts Poe tried to rub his chest gently and met the sticky plastic of the flexpoly. He fucking despised broken ribs without bacta so he should be grateful for the suit. He would probably feel a lot better tomorrow and maybe he could even convince the doctor to let him fly some recon.

“You should know that you are very lucky,” she said, scribbling a few notes. “When you were brought here you were still bleeding quite heavily. If Finn hadn’t— well, suffice to say that if you didn’t have such a good friend you would most definitely have expired on T’eh-bali’s ship. Although I suspect that if you had also not jumped so heroically in front of a blaster beam, perhaps you wouldn’t have needed so many emergency transfusions. Please get some rest, I’m sure you still need it.”

Poe slumped back on the bed, Doctor Kalonia’s words stumping him. He remembered T’eh-bali – how could he forget the man? He could feel the marks where the Quarren’s claws had left their marks around his throat not to mention the bruises that remained. He also remembered volunteering to go to open the hangar door.

And then T’eh-bali communicating over the intercom: “Poe Dameron, Finn has informed me that the First Order has arrived to investigate the disturbance in this corridor. Unfortunately they monitor energy signatures quite closely. I would assume they will come directly towards you if he cannot distract them for long enough. I will inform you when it is time to open the doors.”
“Copy that,” he’d responded, his voice strange in his own ears. In his fighter helmet the echo wasn’t quite as strong, but in this strange glass bubble he almost felt claustrophobic. Even the Stormtrooper uniform had been less constricting.

He’d crouched low, wishing he had some sort of a weapon as the seconds ticked by. T’eh-bali had estimated five minutes to take-off and as a seasoned pilot that number had to be decently accurate. It had taken him thirty seconds to make his way over here and he’d been waiting for a full minute and a half before T’eh-bali had updated him on their situation. That was three minutes to go.

He hit the four minute mark when he saw a Stormtrooper race around one of the stacks of boxes. “T’eh-bali, should I open her up yet?”

The Trooper was facing in the other direction but they spun and leveled their blaster at him. Without any time to duck away, Poe simply held his hands in the air.

“Not yet, Poe Dameron.”

Luckily for him, that Stormtrooper had turned out to be Finn. “What’s going on?” Poe had asked, hoping that since T’eh-bali hadn’t sounded panicked that the First Order hadn’t invaded their ship or destroyed bits of it or anything.

“The First Order is here,” Finn had said. “Open this door, we gotta go!”

“T’eh-bali said not yet,” Poe said. Was that another Stormtrooper coming around the stack of crates? It was, and since there was no way they could have seen Poe from his position behind Finn, Finn must be their target.

Time had ticked slowly, from the moment the Stormtrooper raised their blaster. Poe reacted without thinking, relying solely on instinct. He pushed Finn aside as hard as he could and tried to twist himself out of the way but the explosive burn of the blaster beam tearing through flesh and blood was horribly familiar to Poe. He heard it more than felt it, as it sizzled and popped through his skin. Unlike some weapons, Stormtrooper blasters carried with them the possibility of a brute force injury as they sometimes shoved their intended victims like the beam itself was a heavy spear.

So he must have fallen then, which would explain the bump at the back of his head. And why he didn’t remember much else except for that terrible moment when Kylo Ren appeared in his vision, a too-wide grin on his face as he wielded that awful lightsaber in the direction of Poe’s mind once again.

Poe rubbed his forehead and let his face rest in his left hand for a moment. What else had happened on that ship?

He must have fallen asleep because he woke up to see Jess and Bas hovering above his bed, obviously not too concerned as they were playing a game of hit-my-hand.

“What, no gifts?” he asked, propping himself up.

“Poe!” Jess said, taking the opportunity to smack Bas’ hands hard before she grinned at Poe. “You’re alive!”

“We did so bring you a gift,” Bastian said, sounding injured.

A chorus of beeps and wails greeted Poe from very low down. Poe leaned over the side of the bed, ignoring the pain as best as he could. It was worth it to see BB-8 angle itself so that its little head
could reach his extended fingertips.

“**So much has happened,**” BB-8 said. **“I have to tell you so very many things.”**

“Okay, okay,” Poe said. He couldn’t reach very far but he rubbed BB-8’s little head in circles with his index finger. **“What’s up?”**

“*Death Star raids planned. Move soon before they complete ships. Small teams, two Death Stars not same different strategy. General says Poe stays back. Finn goes with small team to different Death Stars.*”

“What?” Poe exclaimed, sitting up so quickly he felt the blood pound in his head. His vision blanked out into a dark sky with golden stars throbbing to the beat of his frantic heart. It cleared after a moment in which he’d fallen half off the bed, caught by Bas at the level of BB-8’s head. Bas was quite strong although he wasn’t a very large person, but even so his muscles were quivering with the effort of holding Poe up.

“What’d you tell him that for, BB-8?” Bas asked, aghast.

Jessika smacked Bastian’s chest with an open palm. **“That’s why they didn’t want BB-8 to come in here and see Poe, you dumb fuck.”**

“Ow, hey!” Bas protested. **“I thought he would be missing his little buddy! I thought it would help him, y’know? Heal faster?”**

“Oh it’s going to help me heal faster,” Poe muttered. **“Get me out of this fucking flexpoly.”**

“Poe,” Jessika said, rolling her eyes. **“You’re not going to be left out, just—”**

“I just, what? I won’t be out there in my fucking X-Wing? While you guys are flying into Death Stars, risking your lives? We don’t have enough trained pilots to properly take on these motherfuckers and you know it, Jess,” Poe said, using Bas as a prop to help him stand on wobbly legs. **“Get the doctor or I’m taking this off without her,”** he warned.

Jessika stomped off but brought back Doctor Kalonia who eyed Poe up, disapproval writ in her raised eyebrow. **“You’re not flying even right after you remove the suit, Poe,”** she said.

“Put me through a PT test,” Poe said, a bit too enthusiastically. He winced and put a hand over his chest. **“Come on, Doc. Everyone needs me out there and you need to save what bacta you can salvage from this suit for the fallout from this Death Star bullshit. We can’t have more than one suit left, can we? And there’s no way the tanks are filled yet.”**

“You don’t get to tell me what to do,” Doctor Kalonia retorted. **“I’m the doctor here, Mister Dameron.”** He could see it though, the spark in her eyes, the hesitation in her movements.

Doctor Kalonia’s lips thinned out into a line. **“You sit your ass back down on that bed, Dameron,”** she said, finally. **“The attack is not planned for tomorrow. One more night in that suit or you’ll be so distracted from broken ribs that you won’t be able to go to the bathroom by yourself, let alone fly into a war.”**

Would having been healed make a difference in the long run, Poe wondered as he followed her instructions and laid back down, if they were flying into death itself?
Finn felt invigorated. The past few days had given him a purpose again: just like when they had set out to destroy Starkiller base the plans to eliminate the Death Stars were something tangible that he could really understand and get behind. He hadn’t been able to see Poe today yet or most of yesterday, and each time when he had gone in the man had been fast asleep.

He was starting to feel like he belonged more in this fighting force as well: after three successful missions (one unsanctioned) for the Resistance in which he hadn’t sold them out to the enemy most of the people in the planning room seemed to trust him. There were a few from whom he caught dirty looks but the majority took anything he said at face value. Of course, a lot of the information that Finn had to share with them lined up with things the Resistance had already been aware of so when he was able to recall things they had never heard they accepted it as truth.

Finn wasn’t even bothered by the people who obviously couldn’t trust him. It was fine to be suspicious and skeptical, especially given the position that the Resistance was in. If a few people questioned him then it meant they would hopefully properly question truly false information as well.

“Upon closer inspection,” Captain Geno Namit said, “Lieutenant Kaydel pointed out that while five of these Death Stars are identical in terms of how we believe they can be destroyed, three are built differently but no less vulnerably. The remaining two, however, appear to have significantly greater shielding in place around the core reactors. They might be further along but regardless, we will need to proceed with caution.”

“We came up with an idea,” Kaydel piped up. Finn saw her fiddling with the cuff of her uniform probably where she thought nobody could see it. But her back was straight and her hazel eyes were determined and bright so the small act of nervousness made no difference. “To send in small teams like we did with the recon, only these teams have incendiary devices with them. Provided they don’t get caught, they should all be able to destroy if not only the shielding then the Death Stars themselves.”

“And what of the people carrying these incendiaries?” General Organa asked. “Would they be able to make it out in time?”

“By our calculations yes,” Captain Namit said. “We employed the use of our technical staff who believe they have created timers as backups to remote detonation devices.”

“Remotes won’t work if the shields are up,” Finn noted. “Most of the First Order shields block explosions, communications, anything that could travel as a wave.”

Captain Namit pursed his lips. “What if the shields are simply on the outsides of the Death Stars? One of them is like this.”

“Then if you had a remote that triggered a timer, they could activate it just before taking off,” Kaydel said, looking at Finn eagerly.

“Yes,” Finn said.

“The last ship we believe has a shield around the reactor core as well as one around the ship,” Captain Namit said. “So only a timer would be effective then… and they would have to somehow
“make it through the shielding...”

“Shields can be deactivated,” Finn said. “It’s not very complicated.”

“Would you be able to train someone in time?” General Organa asked. “Or do you think someone with your particular skill set might have to be present to accomplish?”

“Uh,” Finn said. That sounded even more dangerous than it had been the first time around, and that had just been for reconnaissance. One day he was going to get recognized after having infiltrated so many First Order ships. “How much time do I have?”

General Organa’s eyes spoke volumes. “Two days.”

“I would have to go,” Finn said. He could maybe train someone if he had a week but with so much riding on this including the person’s life, two days would not be long enough.

“And would you be willing to?” General Organa asked, again making him feel like he wouldn’t be cast out if did not agree to go.

“Yes,” Finn said.

“Very well then,” General Organa said. She reviewed the holos in front of her and again the one in the middle of the room. There was a reason she was the leader of the Resistance and it wasn’t just for her good looks. “We will send reduced wings of pilots to each Death Star, appearing simultaneously to each, including the two odd ones out. The infiltration teams will go earlier and have twenty-four hours to complete their missions.”

“What happens if Kylo Ren shows up?” Finn asked at the same time as Captain Wexley piped up with: “We don’t have enough pilots, ma’am.”

General Organa’s eyes focused on Finn. “Rey and I have been working on a plan for that based on what your report said happened on Mygeeto.”

“I thought I had him,” Rey said regretfully. “But he seemed to hesitate in following me before running off. Maybe he got a transmission... I couldn’t quite hear on his end. I have been meditating and training this past week however and I believe I have an improved understanding of what I need to do.”

“Very good,” General Organa said, with a nod to Rey like a mentor. Rey was almost beaming behind Finn even though when he checked on her, her expression was neutral. But he could still feel it radiating off her. “As for your concerns, Captain Wexley, our pilots are unfortunately limited. And with the loss of Captain Dameron from our roster, we will need to fill in the gaps.”

“You make it sound like I died, General,” came a voice from the doorway that had everyone in the room on their feet in an instant.

Poe Dameron stood there on his own two feet, decked out in his flight suit. “Captain Dameron here, reporting for duty. Permission to enter?”

General Organa raised an eyebrow but tilted her head to the side. “Permission granted, Captain.”

People patted Poe on the back and grinned at him throughout the room as he walked stiffly towards his post near the pilots. He came just close enough that Finn could see he still looked pale and drawn and worse for the wear. Finn wondered how his wounds were: he could see just a hint of bruise remaining above the orange collar.
Poe also wouldn’t meet Finn’s eyes, even when he sat down across the room. Maybe he was just trying to catch up and pay attention but Finn couldn’t stop staring, hoping for even a glimmer of a glance, but even as the meeting progressed, he got nothing.

By the end of the session, Finn felt truly desperate. He wasn’t properly parsing what the General or the pilots or the engineers were all saying. He barely managed to agree when the crowd did and then tried to start forward to talk to Poe but was blocked by the pilots sweeping him away, presumably to go through their runs and possibly do some training.

Bacta could do wonders for a person but could Poe really be ready so soon?

“Are you alright?” Rey asked, somewhere off in the distance. Finn turned to the side to see her looking at him with concern. “You seem far away.”

“Oh me?” Finn asked. “I’m fine.”

“Mmhmm,” Rey said. “Sounds like a dirty lie, Finn. Friends aren’t supposed to lie to each other, you know.”

“I’m—” Finn said, glancing over at the retreating back of Poe before he could restrain himself. “Just a bit distracted.”

“Me too,” Rey admitted. “We should go do something.”

“Like what?” Finn asked as they wandered out of the meeting hall. He looked over his shoulder when he felt something probing and caught General Organa’s eyes. Her expression was inscrutable, like she knew something that he didn’t. His experience with the women of the Resistance so far was that they mostly always did.

Rose was waiting for them outside the room, her eyes bright. “Rey said you might need a distraction,” she said. “And guess what’s broken again?”

Finn unfortunately recognized the toolbelt she was wearing and groaned. “No,” he said. “Not a septic tank rupture.”

Rose’s smile was like the sun. “Oh you know it, loverboy,” she said.

Rey looked concerned, despite her claimed Jedi cool. “What’s a septic tank?”

“Miss Jedi Master,” Rose said, a bundle of glee and delight barely contained at the seams. “You’re in for a real education.”

Rey looked pleadingly at Finn, who smiled despite himself. “Why do I feel like I’m not going to like this, Finn?”

“I guess it must be your Jedi intuition,” Finn said innocently.

Poe

“Break it to me Snap,” Poe said as the pilots trudged as one out of mission control. “How bad is it?”
“No more fighters down since D’Qar and Crait at least,” Snap said. “Everyone on your crazy-ass mission made it back in one piece. Ships are OK, there were a couple of rust buckets here but we found a few gems in the heap too. I think maybe the villagers around here have been taking care of them as best as they can, but they’re not pilots or mechanics for the most part.”

That would be his father, Poe thought to himself. Making sure his mom’s A-wing stayed in fighting condition. “I heard you say we were short. How many?”

“Ten Death Stars,” Snap said, running calculations in his head. You could always tell when he was doing so because he looked off into the distance, squinted a bit and screwed his mouth to one side. He bit his upper lip once, rubbed his cheek with his index finger and nodded. “We probably have enough people after recruiting to do three fighters per ship, four at a few with maybe one or two of the wings lacking senior personnel. Thanks to you we’ll at least only be down that many. Probably can send some transport ships, there’s a couple floating around here actually, that we could just put a few people in. Three bombers here, though we can’t staff them. Just enough to give a more intimidating presence.”

“Don’t want them to think we’re stretched too thin,” Poe agreed. “And do we have detailed plans for each of the Death Stars?”

“Better yet we already have attack plans for most of them,” Snap said. He was one of the few senior pilots left after Crait, with Nien Numb being the most senior of them all. Nien was happy to take a backseat in terms of leadership so long as the leaders weren’t complete fuckups and Snap had always had a good head for making plans.

Poe’s wasn’t shabby by any means, but even he had to admit that Snap, though named as such, made slightly less rash snap decisions than Poe. Usually their differences offset each other in a complementary way, although maybe Leia didn’t see it that way.

“Where can you use me?” Poe asked.

They’d arrived in the hangar bay, this being the place the pilots were most comfortable in. Surrounded by their ships and their droids they could feel at peace and make their decisions with a clear head. Poe already felt like his skin was becoming rejuvenated now that he could see Black One up ahead.

He did notice when the pilots shuffled their feet a bit, some not looking at him and others looking a bit sick. They were trying to be careful around him he realized. “What?” he asked. “I’m not a fragile paper doll or anything.”

“It’s not that,” Snap said, the only one brave enough to speak at the moment. Even Jessika Pava wouldn’t look directly at Poe. “We need you out there.”

“So what is it?” Poe asked, feeling almost like they thought he was a petulant child being denied a treat.

“The General didn’t want us to tell you… Finn’s on one of the missions,” Bastian said quietly.

Now that just didn’t make sense. It lined up with what BB-8 had told him but not with what Poe thought of as the logic of the universe. “What?” Poe asked. There was no way he had misheard. There were no ship engines blaring to life, no frantic people running from station to station, not even any of Nien Numb’s crazy fiddle music playing. “But he’s not a pilot.”

“No,” Snap admitted. “Two of the Stars have shields that prevent us from even flying near the
surface. We’re sending in fighters to make it seem like we aren’t aware of this, but it’s really a
cover for two stealth teams going in early to plant explosives at the cores.”

Well, Poe could definitely understand now why they hadn’t wanted to tell him about this. He could
feel his heart pounding hard and fast in his fingertips as anger made his hands shake. He could also
see in the eyes of his fellow pilots that this was not a subject they were interested in discussing.

How could they not be though? Finn had been with them through some very strange times during
which he’d saved their asses no less than five times now. And they wanted to send him into the
heart of a Death Star? When Kylo Ren probably knew exactly what was going on and that Finn
was probably going to be coming to the hardest Death Star to shut down.

Poe squeezed a hand into a fist at his side and tried to look nonchalant. “The General...” he trailed
off, hearing a crack in his voice. “She must know what she is doing.”

“We really need you on one of the teams attacking the shieldless Death Stars,” Snap said. His eyes
weren’t as desperate as some of the pilots. His face was firm and composed like he was ready to
shut Poe down if Poe went ahead and threw a temper tantrum. He felt like he might: he wasn’t
even going to be there, watching Finn’s back? “The plan is anyone who takes out a Death Star and
survives jumps to light speed and tries to help destroy the others.”

“I think one of the Death Stars that needs a manual team is also going to need pilots to shoot out
the reactor cores,” Jessika said. “From what I can see on these plans they’re probably going to have
to knock out shields first and then once they get free and clear a pilot can go in.”

“Shit,” Snap said, closing his eyes briefly. “Okay, well. Let’s break off into our teams then if
everyone is fine with what’s going on.”

The pilots agreed, Poe remaining silent. He didn’t know what he would say if he opened his
mouth. He knew he would feel better once he was in the cockpit. He felt a nudge behind his knee
and heard the familiar chirps of his droid. “Yeah, yeah,” he muttered. “Happy beeps.”

Flying did help make Poe feel better. The effortlessness of the ship carving through space, the
practiced flips and turns and evasive maneuvers as they played catch-the-banner in the sky helped
his mind find a bit of calm. When they landed and he got out of the ship, a bit stiff and sore but
otherwise not worse for the wear, he found Snap at his X-Wing. “Some of these pilots are the new
recruits, right?” he asked.

Snap nodded. “Yeah. I wish we didn’t have to send them out so soon. But we need them and they
volunteered. Most of them have been pilots for a long time, so hopefully they’ll make out fine.”

“Do you have a list of locations and the plans that I can take back to my room?” Poe asked. He still
felt a bit out of the loop, but if he did a bit of studying he would be much readier for the day when
it came.

Snap did look relieved that Poe wasn’t complaining at all and produced a portable holo. “You’re
starting with number six,” he said.

“I want to be able to fly it in my sleep,” Poe said, which earned him a very painful shoulder clasp
from Snap Wexley. He tried not to grimace but something must have shown.

“Shit, sorry,” Snap said. Jessika and Bastian were approaching, along with Wright and a few of the
faces that Poe recognized as new recruits. “You can fly with your shoulder hurting like that?”

“He’s an old man,” Jessika piped up with from behind them. Some of the recruits shot each other
nervous looks. *This is Poe Dameron, best pilot in the Resistance,* they were probably thinking. *How dare you speak of him in this way.*

Jessika smirked. “He’s got lots of aches and pains.”

“I’m not that old,” Poe started but Bastian chimed in, his deep voice cheery and clear even though he was heavily allergic to planetside air.

“How dare you speak of him in this way.”

“Poe’s so old he was born when the first Death Star was destroyed.”

“How dare you speak of him in this way.”

“He’s so old he remembers the Republic—”

“The Empire—”

“Boba Fett—”

The group of pilots laughed, overtaking him in their exuberance and their faces were alight with such cheeky joy Poe couldn’t find it in the heart to even put forth a protest. He let the group pull ahead and hung back with Snap who had on the same resignedly proud smile that Poe was sure he was also wearing.

“They can do it,” Snap said. “They have to. Will you be able to?”

“I’m fine in my X-Wing,” Poe said, which was the truth. “Nobody’s slapping me around in there.” Besides, it was more of a dull ache than anything at this point. By tomorrow the bacta-fueled healing process would have sped him along even further and the scar tissue would probably be just on the verge of sensitive where it would hang for the next few months before becoming just another on a long list of scars gained from the First Order.

“What’s for lunch?” he asked. He’d been out of it for enough days that he couldn’t remember what the meal schedule was.

“We’re on Yavin 4 mate,” Bastian caroled up ahead, looking back over his shoulder at Poe. “You know what that means.”

**Planetside food.**

The cooks who worked for the Resistance were no slouches when it came to their chosen craft. Poe could not deny that they could make almost anything taste good if not great. But when onboard a ship like the *Raddus* for months at a time, it could be difficult to get fresh ingredients so there were periods of time when all meals were made from previously dehydrated stock. Nothing could hold a candle to a carrot pulled out of fresh soil or a steaming hot Gruffle-Shellava pie (a Resistance specialty).

Today was no exception from the rule that the Resistance cooks could make gold from shit. They had created some type of light, fluffy orange bread and a rich, hearty stew. He even spied some shiny, fresh-plucked fruits and a chocolate pudding for dessert which had been a staple during Poe’s childhood. It had also been his mom’s favourite from her days in the Rebellion. Plates loaded, the pilots congregated at a table. Having just sat down to eat, Poe was only a few mouthfuls into his meal before Jessika, sitting beside him, perked up and waved across the room.

“Rey!” she shouted. “Over here!”
“I thought you hated her,” Bas muttered between sloppy mouthfuls. He was only allergic to the pollen in the air, not the planetside food which he said helped to clear his sinuses. Poe was pretty sure that was bullshit since he also saw Bas using an inhaler around the clock whenever they landed on a planet.

“I do not,” Jessika said primly. “I think she can be annoying just as well as any of you can be. But she is also so cool. I’d let her kick my ass any day.”

“Someone’s got a crush,” sing-songed Wright quietly enough that the approaching Rey couldn’t hear her.

Behind Rey was Rose Tico, her round face lit up with laughter at something inaudible in the loud room. And behind Rose… Poe ducked his head to stare intently at his stew. Finn was once again in Poe’s old jacket, with a beige shirt under it that looked like it might have been freshly pressed. Poe wasn’t sure how he managed to stay so clean: Poe himself as the rest of the pilots, had the top half of his flight suit tied around his waist, the white shirt he wore under stained with sweat and an inexplicable streak of dark grease (he hadn’t even fixed anything on Black One and it had all felt grease free to him).

The pilots erupted into greetings when they saw who was approaching their table and– the traitors– shifted so that the trio could sit almost right in front of Poe.

“Poe!” Rey said. “You’re alive!”

“Barely,” Jess said, and decided it was Absolutely Necessary to poke Poe in the shoulder. He winced away, glad he’d at least worn his sleeved undershirt. The angry twist of scar tissue around his blaster wound was too much for him to show off just yet.

“At least he’s up and walking,” Rey said.

“And flying,” Jess said, lighting up with the banter. “We’ll be ready by tomorrow. How’s your training going?”

Poe peeked up in time to see Rey scrunch her face up as though she had smelled something rank. “Humans are disgusting,” she said. “Where I come from we bury our… our business out back somewhere you can’t… smell it. Or see it. Or have to ever touch it again.”

“They helped me with a septic leak,” Rose said matter-of-factly.

“It wasn’t that bad,” Finn said, to which Rose nodded. “I’ve smelled worse.”

“Like when everyone conveniently forgets to check the tank for a week and it leaks the whole time,” Rose said, the corners of her eyes crinkling with mirth.

“Or when the food waste is deposited into the wrong bin and sits there for a month before someone decides to tell maintenance to clean them out,” Finn said. “I had that one time.”

Rose nodded in Maintenance Worker Solidarity. “It can be a tough job but someone’s gotta do it.”

“I’ll never put trash in the wrong bin again,” Rey said, looking like she might die from disgust which was saying a lot coming from her. She shook her head and dove into the meal in front of her like a ravenous dog who might have never eaten in its life and was absolutely certain that it would never get fed again.

“Wow,” Finn said, carefully taking a bit of stew. His eyes lit up with the joy of someone
discovering a new flavour. “What is this?”

“What’s this?” Bas said. “This is the best shit in the galaxy right here.”

“What does that mean?” Finn asked, a sharp contrast in his neat eating habits to the sloppy Rey.

“Planetside fare,” Bas said. “This is the best shit in the galaxy right here.”

“On a planet like Yavin 4 with large settlements they usually grow crops,” Snap explained. “Everything is fresh.”

“The flavours...” Finn fell silent and dug in, eyes closing as he chewed each mouthful thoughtfully. He ate slowly like every bite was something he should savour.

Jessika elbowed Poe who jerked his head towards her. He almost dropped his bread into what was left of his soup. “Ow,” he hissed.

She widened her eyes momentarily and twitched them towards Finn. What?

She mouthed something like You are Hairy.

What? Poe mouthed back, squinting in confusion. Lip reading was not his forte.

You, Jessika mouthed, jerking her eyes to Finn again, this time with a quick rise of her eyebrows. Hairy.

Poe shook his head. He couldn’t understand what she was getting at. She leaned over and hissed: “Staring.”

Poe grunted and scowled into a bite of the orange bread, chewing thoughtfully. He was just on his last bite and contemplating dessert when Finn made a sound like he was unsure of something.

“What’s this one?” Finn asked, and one of the recruits said: “Chocolate pudding. It’s good, you’ll like it.”

Finn gasped and Poe looked over despite his best intentions. His eyes glistened in awe as he dipped his spoon back into the viscous dessert. When he put the spoonful back in his mouth his eyes closed, his forehead smoothing out in a brief moment of relaxation. He made a noise then that Poe was pretty sure should be outlawed, in a decidedly sinful declaration of bliss. “Oh my,” Finn murmured, his voice soft. He took in another spoonful so carefully like the pudding might be more precious than a kyber crystal.

Jessika stomped on Poe’s foot then in what Poe could only describe as a truly hateful act. It caused a small chain reaction: Poe’s last mouthful of orange bread, forgotten until now, followed his sharp intake of breath right down his trachea and directly into his lungs.

The choking was followed by pounding on his back from Snap and a mortifyingly concerned note from Finn. Poe’s eyes watered and his body thankfully lost its grip on the erection it had been steadily forming under the table. He waved off the back pounder and forced himself to gulp a mouthful of water, continuing to cough into his napkin in an absolutely embarrassing manner. He shot a glare at Jessika through burning eyes but she looked positively angelic.

“Are you alright?” Rey asked.

“He’ll be fine,” Jessika said, primly taking a scoop of chocolate pudding. “It happens even to the best of us.”

“I’m going to get going,” Snap said, shrugging his flight suit back over his shoulders. “Wheels up in ten everyone.”

Poe quickly stood as well, trying to make sure his traitorous penis stayed put where it was supposed to be, out of the way. “See you all there,” he said, careful not to look at Finn lest his lower half get any more bad ideas.

He had some studying to do.

**Finn**

Poe didn’t show up to dinner that evening. Several of the pilots did but as Jessika explained, most of the flight leaders were deep in their plans, running through scenarios and brainstorming.

Finn was a bit disappointed but figured he could find Poe the next day to talk to him. He had no clue if either of them were going to make it back from these missions and the way Poe had looked at Finn in that supply closet on the Death Star still weighed heavily on his mind, not to mention the kiss itself. And the way Finn had felt when he had seen Poe white as a sheet on the gurney, the way it had made his stomach twist so anxiously.

Poe didn’t show his face at breakfast either, which at lunch when Bas and Jess arrived was explained as him having come to eat before everyone else was awake.

Finn, who ate five square meals a day, one hour earlier than everyone else (hard to shake the two decades of indoctrination) and one after, found that hard to believe.

He didn’t come with the pilots that lunch either and by dinner Finn was positively fidgety. Snap hadn’t shown up either, apparently as deep into their planning as Poe but that didn’t make a lick of difference to Finn.

That evening there was one final mass meeting, called by the General, to go over the following several days’ worth of work.

Finn could barely concentrate when she outlined what he and his team were going to be contributing to the whole affair. He’d gone over it with a fine-toothed comb several times already with his group, which included Rose as she was one of the few non-pilots who had infiltrated the First Order before. Because of that she was heading up the other team, with Rey hopefully taking care of Kylo Ren for them.

But all of this was background noise. Finn had learned long ago to carve out a slot in his conscious mind which could be paying attention in the background, leaving the rest of his mind free. He used to use this skill when with the First Order to imagine himself a life without plastoid.

Now all he could think about was Poe.

He stood as quickly as he could when the meeting ended but he was no match for the crowd and before he could wade across the room the pilots had gone again. They were all understandably concerned and really Finn should be too but he found with the rise of so much action it was tough
to shake the mindset of being expendable.

When he left the First Order he had thought his life would be different outside but it appeared he was still a soldier. Maybe one day he would break free.

“Finn,” a voice cut through the fog, tired but warm.

“General Organa,” Finn said, resisting the urge to salute. “Sorry. I was…”

“Lost in thought,” General Organa said, leaning heavily on her cane. “I thought you might be. Everyone has left but I think your friends might be waiting for you.”

“My friends?” Finn asked. Of course. Rose and Rey.

The General levered a long look at Finn, silent.

“Sorry,” he said. “I’ll leave.”

“Why don’t you take a seat, young man,” she said, defying all expectations. She extended a ringed hand to one of the chairs, slightly askew from the crowd’s egress.

Finn sat, unsure of what to do with his hands.

“Finn,” she said. “You have some very serious tasks to perform in the next few days. I want to make sure you are prepared.”

“Oh, I’m ready, Ma’am,” Finn rushed to assure her. “We have been over our plans and I think they’re good.”

“And your escape routes?” General Organa asked with a raised eyebrow. “If there is no chance of survival I will not send in a soldier, young man.”

“Even if one sacrifice saves the galaxy?” Finn didn’t understand this woman’s whole mentality.

“Son, there will always be another Death Star, another First Order. There is no end to the struggle between the light and the dark. We try to achieve balance but one always seeks to tip the scales in their favour.” General Organa tapped her fingers on the head of her cane, the rings clicking and clacking as she did. “Yes we must fight to end the tyranny in this round but if nobody is around afterwards to enjoy the struggle for balance then what has it all been for?”

Finn nodded. He was pretty sure she had told him this before but he found it hard to believe. He almost felt the urge to go again, to leave, to turn his back on the fighting and towards peace, towards a life somewhere alone where he wouldn’t be asked such questions at such terrible costs.

But the General was right. If there wasn’t anybody left to enjoy it with it wouldn’t matter where he went. He would be alone. Like he had been growing up with the First Order, separated from his siblings and comrades and even air itself by white plastoid.

“Okay,” Finn said. He was about to stand up to go when the General smacked the tip of her cane down on the seat right next to his left hand. “Ah!”

“I didn’t say you could go,” she said. “I said before: I want to make sure you are prepared for this mission. I know a distracted man when I see one, Finn.”

“Distracted?” Finn asked. Maybe by crazy ladies smacking him with canes. And the fact that he was going to be risking his life sometime before noon tomorrow. And... he jerked his chin back
defensively. “I’m not distracted.”

General Organa raised an eyebrow.

“I’m not,” Finn said. What, just because he couldn’t stop thinking about Poe’s lips he was
distracted now?

“That,” General Organa said, waving her cane in a figure eight in Finn’s direction. “Is exactly
what I’m talking about.”

“Stop,” she said, finally putting her cane down and holding a finger up this time. Finn felt his
mouth snap shut and not of his own accord. Not fair, was she using the Force? “I don’t need to hear
about it. I just want you to take care of it. No more distractions than you can help before you take
off tomorrow, do you hear?”

Finn nodded. The invisible pressure on his jaw disappeared and he said, respectfully, “Yes,
General.”

She waved a hand for him to go. He hurried to follow the command.

Just as she had said, Rey and Rose were waiting for him outside. “Finn,” Rey said, very seriously.
“Everyone has been telling me that before people embark on a big dangerous mission the
Resistance cooks make a very special dessert. So we have to go. Stop dilly dallying and hurry up.”

Finn followed them, glancing over his shoulder only briefly to catch the General’s twinkling eyes.

Take care of the distraction.

Great.

Poe

He wasn’t avoiding Finn. At least, that’s what Poe told himself as he ran through the motions of
battle plans and backup strategies. He ran his flight of three through drills until they were shouting
with confidence when they ran through all of their passes just right.

It was tough being a flight leader, okay? He could only do so many practice runs with these kids
before they went out into the belly of the beast. That first moment of flight of the battle was
peaceful, just out of warp when you had the element of surprise. You took out as many big guns as
you could until the enemy started shooting back and then it was anyone’s game. He’d seen so
many good, so many great pilots downed by a lucky shot, an unlucky turn or a second of
hesitation.

It was all just a big crapshoot and Poe wasn’t sure what would happen at the other end of it. He’d
been confident when they had taken on the dreadnought for example and look at how that had
turned out! Cobalt squadron all but wiped out, all of their existing bombers lost, friends and family
members who would never come back from the inky black of space.

He was just doing his duty, he told himself. He was however, avoiding Jessika Pava, with her
incredible ability to make him feel guilty. Unfortunately, when she hopped out of her own X-Wing
coming back from her own flights, she always managed somehow to catch up to Poe.
“Coming to lunch?” she’d asked.

“Just running over something with Snap,” he’d said. “Bring me back something.”

“Coming to dinner?” she’d asked.

“Threw out a bolt somewhere on that last run,” he’d said, waist deep in engine oil. It wasn’t a lie. “I’ll eat later.”

“Didn’t see you at breakfast,” she’d said, her index finger tapping out a solid beat on her hip.

“I ate earlier,” he’d lied, glad that his stomach didn’t sell him out with a growl. He hadn’t been hungry anyway that morning. Too much going through his head to keep down anything more than a hot cup of whatever caffeinated beverage the Resistance cooks had made from planetside herbs.

“Will you be at lunch today?” she’d asked. He’d shook his head.

“Dinner, Captain?”

“This time you have to come,” she’d finally said, when the General had called a meeting. He wasn’t sure why they were having it so early: usually she liked to do it the night before the show and he knew they weren’t scheduled to take off for another day.

She’d nudged him with her knee during the meeting and leaned over. “Finn’s looking at you. You should say hi.”

“I’m trying to pay attention,” he’d hissed back, eyes focused on Leia. They’d all told him that Finn was going on a mission, so fine. But when and where? Leia was making it sound like some teams were leaving the next day when he knew, he knew the big fight wasn’t supposed to start until the day after. But then she’d moved onto the greater battle and he had allowed himself to get lost in the imaginations of flight once more.

He was the first one out of the hall, itching to try one last run before he went over some plans with Snap and then it would be time to try and sleep for at least a few hours.

He had expected to be the last one to leave the hangar and go to bed but when he finally wrapped up his last oiling of the day and took an end of the day shower, Jessika was waiting right outside the men’s showers.

“Hey boss,” she said casually, a holo in hand. “I know you’re off to bed but think you can help me puzzle out a problem I got with this run on your way?”

Poe cleaned out his ear with the towel around his shoulders and shrugged. “Sure,” he said.

Jessika explained to him how their run was going to go, with her Death Star having the reactor core centralized in the unit. It all sounded good to him, including her strategy for dealing with the swarms of TIE fighters.

“So what,” Poe said, frowning at her holo one last time. “What’s the problem with these runs? It all seems pretty clear-cut and reasonable to me.”

“Oh it is,” Jessika said. “There aren’t any actual problems. I was trying to make sure you were listening to me for once.”

For once? Poe opened his mouth but lost the ability to come up with a snappy retort when they
turned the corner to the hallway his room was in. Pacing in front of his door, with his shoulders at attention like always and that god damned jacket was Finn.

“You traitor,” Poe muttered, unable to shake Jessika when she put her iron grip on his arm and stopped him in his tracks.

“You two need to talk,” she said, eyes narrowed. “You’re too distracted. It could cost us all in two days. And he’s distracted, too. There is no room for error, Poe. We’re at war here and you can’t feed me your bullshit. Anything could happen tomorrow and I don’t want either of you to pay the price for your own stupidity. So don’t fuck this up.”

“What?” Poe asked, but Jessika pushed him down the hall and stalked off in the other direction. He watched her go, deciding that now was the right time to towel the water that had been steadily dripping down the back of his neck. He was pretty sure Finn was staring at him from down the hall but really, his hair was dripping wet and while he’d been hot coming out of the showers the buildings on Yavin 4 could get quite cold at night, especially the ones sheltered by the forest cover.

He cursed himself briefly for not having dried his hair more thoroughly back at the showers but in his defense, Jessika had popped up out of nowhere and distracted him. And he wasn’t even wearing a fucking shirt, just holding it in one hand like a total and complete weirdo. The showers here had the hottest water! He didn’t like to get his night time shirt sweaty right away… if he had nightmares like he did most nights now since his Kylo Ren interrogations, he’d be able to get it nice and sweaty on his own in the middle of the night.

Well. He was just good and truly fucked now, wasn’t he? He took a deep breath and steeled his nerves. It had never before been said of Poe Dameron that he was scared of anything, except maybe Wampas with their too-sharp teeth and complete lack of ability to be reasoned with.

He turned on his heel and widened his eyes in mock surprise. “Finn!” he said, with what he hoped would come across as a casual smile and not one that betrayed the anxious fluttering of his heart. “What’s up, buddy?”

Finn

He saw Jessika before he saw Poe, and for a brief second he wondered if maybe she hadn’t been able to make sure he was going to come like she had promised him earlier. The part of his brain that was singing to him on repeat: you are a bad kisser, such a bad kisser, a bad kisser.

That part of Finn’s brain picked up its tempo when Poe rounded the corner, his eyes widening in shock before he turned around to say something to Jess. They were too far away for Finn to hear them and he put his head down and continued his machinelike pacing. He still didn’t know what he was going to say when Poe– if Poe even did come up to him.

He’d strategically placed himself in front of Poe’s room so that if Poe was going to go to sleep at all he’d have to see Finn, have to talk to him, and then finally Jessika left and Poe did turn around.

Finn felt his insides clench like he might be sick when Poe came up close enough for Finn to properly see him. He was tinged with pink, hair curling and wet like he had just come out of a hot shower. This was further evidenced by the towel slung across his shoulders and the shirt in his left
hand. It was not covering his chest, where one would expect a shirt to be.

“Finn,” Poe said, smiling casually like he hadn’t just been avoiding Finn for two, maybe three days straight. “What’s up, buddy?”

Finn narrowed his eyes at Poe, who sidled by him to punch in the code to unlock his room. “Poe.”

“Did you need something? I’m pretty beat,” Poe said, shooting Finn a look over his shoulder and sort of out of the corner of his eye. “I have flight training in the morning and all.”

Finn knew that Poe was looking at him but when Poe had brushed past Finn, Finn had caught a glimpse of the bright red, puckered, angry skin near his left shoulder. It was about as distracting as the barely-dry expanse of Poe’s back. “Uh,” Finn said. He was staring hard and he felt his cheeks starting to burn with a blush. “Yes. The– the General… she said I should…”

Finn squeezed his eyes shut and pinched the bridge of his nose. “I need to talk to you. And it’s very… I mean, it’s of utmost… look, can you put on a shirt? Please?”

When he peeked his eyes open, Poe had turned a bit towards him and was leaning on the doorframe, an eyebrow raised. “What, never seen a naked man before?”

“No,” Finn said, sure his blush was moving up a category into covering his neck and hands. “I’ve seen men. Before. So why is it so distracting when it’s you?”

Poe didn’t respond to that, but he did thankfully hang his towel just inside his room and pull his shirt over his head. “Better?” he asked, almost like he was upset. “Now what do you need? I really do need to sleep.”

“I told you we need to talk,” Finn said. “Can I come in or should I stand out in the hallway for this?”

Poe looked unsure so Finn took it as stand in the hallway. “Fine,” he said, hands clenched into fists at his sides. “When we kissed—”


Finn’s feet instinctively followed the pulling. He watched as Poe checked the hallway before closing the door behind him. He had been right to have this as a fear, then. The First Order had always stressed the importance of male-female relationships being the only ones that existed but Stormtroopers had been forbidden from exploring any parts of their bodies with or without other people so it really hadn’t mattered that much in the end.

Rose just hadn’t made him and Poe seem like that big of a deal, but he’d clearly misinterpreted what she had said.

“So it’s not okay then, what we did,” Finn said carefully.

Poe did that thing, where he squinted and tilted his head to the side a bit. “What?”

“The kissing,” Finn said, raising his eyebrows. “You don’t want anybody to hear about it. So it must not be okay.”

“No, I didn’t say that,” Poe said.
“I didn’t say that you said it,” Finn muttered.

“Finn,” Poe said, looking up as though for strength. “It’s not that it isn’t okay.”

“Then what is it?” Finn asked. “You don’t want anybody to hear that we kissed. You don’t want to look me in the eye. You don’t want to be seen with me or be seen looking at me or—”

“It’s a private matter,” Poe said. “I know I seem fast and loose, okay, but I’m not. Not with stuff like this. And the pilots, they just love to gossip and to be way too involved in my personal life so I just. I guess I have… stepped back from anything, you know. Romantic. For a long time.”

“But if it’s private and it’s between us then you should still be able to talk to me about it,” Finn said. He’d stepped towards Poe, one foot forward. And Poe stepped back. Was he interested? Was he not? Why wouldn’t these Resistance fighters ever speak their minds? It wasn’t just the women, it was the men too! How frustrating they all could be!

“Sure,” Poe said, stepping back again when Finn moved closer. He wasn’t moving to the side, just back. “Sure, sure. Sure. We can talk, about it. But uh, do we have to do it now?”

“Yes,” Finn said. His mind was laser focused now, and he understood what General Organa had said about getting rid of distractions. She hadn’t meant cutting Poe out of his life or not kissing him. She had just meant finishing up this thread they’d pulled loose from the fabric of their relationship. Pull it all the way out or sew something new with it. “It has to be now.”

“Now, sure, okay, yeah,” Poe said. He was only a few steps away from the wall. “Sure.”

Finn could feel the energy in the air building. Each step he took was Poe taking one in return, and changing with every movement. Poe had started off almost angry, with his chest held cockily high and his chin up, but now he was almost drawing into himself. He was holding something back.

It was infuriating mostly because Finn knew in that moment that he wanted everything Poe could give him. If only he would just let him in.
Before the Storm

Chapter Notes

Warnings for this chapter include explicit sexual conduct!

Poe

Not only was Finn in his room, oh no. Finn was edging towards Poe like a hungry predator. Finn thought that Poe without his shirt was distracting. Finn wanted to talk about the kiss.

The wall was fast approaching behind him: Poe felt his fingertips brush the rough surface a moment before his shoulder blades made contact. He checked both of his sides and saw that Finn had very neatly backed him right into a corner. His heart was beating a staccato rhythm in the pit of his stomach and he had to swallow against the sudden dryness in his mouth when Finn reached out and put a hand somewhere on the wall just above Poe’s right shoulder, effectively pinning him in place.

Why was Poe so goddarned nervous? He wasn’t a fresh-faced recruit, facing down an imperious older princess, not a fumbling-fingered first-timer and usually, usually he was so smooth that they’d practically named sex moves after him.

Maybe that last bit was an exaggeration since Poe honestly hadn’t slept with anyone in, holy shit, four, five years? More? How had it been so long? Maybe it had even been longer… the war had been raging so strongly for ages. It had taken so much away from them all. Even though it might have given him this.

He didn’t remembered being so anxious in a situation like this that he didn’t even know what to say.

“So?” Finn asked, and for someone who really ought to be the fresh-faced fumbling one, his voice was very calm. “Talk to me, Poe Dameron.”

“Well when you say we talk,” Poe said, feeling the back of his head hit the wall behind him when Finn tilted his face a little closer and Poe flinched away. “I mean, that implies, you know. Two people talking. So why don’t you go first?”

“Hmm,” Finn hummed. “Are you sure you want that?”

“I w– I mean I don’t not want it,” Poe said carefully. “I did ask… for it…” There was really nothing he could say that wasn’t suggestive, was there?

“I find you Resistance fighters very difficult to understand,” Finn admitted. His eyes were fixed on Poe’s and Poe almost felt himself leaning towards them like they were the negative pole of a magnet and he the positive. “So I will speak clearly and then I would like for you to reciprocate.”

Reciprocate, god. “Yeah, uh. Sure,” Poe mumbled. He couldn’t look away, except to glance down at Finn’s big mouth with its full lips, a subject upon which his mind decided to stage an impromptu and ill-advised civil war.
One part of his mind said: this is your friend, Finn. Someone who was indoctrinated into the First Order from such a young age that he has never been allowed to know certain emotions the way the rest of humanity has.

Another part asked what it would feel like to kiss him again.

And a very disloyal and very filthy part of his mind asked him to contemplate the poetic nature of a man with a generous mouth being suitably generous towards his fellow man. In that such a man would undoubtedly be an incredibly talented cocksucker, and since Finn was very good at picking up new skills…

Poe swallowed again and tried to shift away from this treasonous part of his mind, which was communicating directly with his equally subversive dick.

“Good,” Finn said and Poe forced himself to listen. “I betrayed the First Order because it was the right thing to do but also because you inspire me to be better. When we were in that closet on the Death Star though Poe and you looked at me, I didn’t care about being better or getting out of there. All I wanted to do was… well, I don’t know. But I wanted to kiss you and so I did and now you’re being all weird and it is making me feel very upset and uncomfortable.”

“And?” Poe asked, his heart thundering to a crescendo in his chest.

“And what?” Finn asked, his forehead creased in exasperation.

“How was it?” Poe asked, way more casually than he felt.

“How?” Finn asked. His chin inched back as he frowned in confusion, giving Poe about a half centimetre more space. “What, the kiss?”

“I thought that’s what we were here to discuss,” Poe said. His heart ticked one beat per minute slower. He was coming up with an idea and if it didn’t work he would accept his defeat and move on. They could both move on.

“Well yes, but,” Finn said. “I mean, I don’t know. I don’t have a frame of reference.”

“Did it feel good?” Poe asked, and this time he moved forward, just a bit. He licked his bottom lip and when Finn moved in concert with him he advanced again, almost able to take his shoulders off the wall.

“Define good in this context,” Finn said, eyes jerking down Poe’s body and back up to his face almost like he was shocked that Poe seemed to be turning the tables on him. “Define good,” he said. “A good kiss you feel in your lips and in your toes.” He pushed himself now off the wall, until his fingertips no longer felt the cold stone behind him. “A good kiss makes your heart beat faster.”

He stepped into Finn’s personal space now, pushing the man back across the small room with the force of his presence. “A good kiss can make you sweat,” step, “make you hard,” step, “make you want more.”

Finn was breathing harder now, Poe could see it in the rise and fall of his chest. One more step and now Finn was the one against the wall. His pupils were expanding slowly, and Poe put two hands above Finn’s head on the wall. “So tell me, Finn,” he said, tilting his head a fraction to the side as he leaned towards the former Stormtrooper. “Was it a good kiss?”
“What’s,” Finn said, his voice almost a breathy whisper. He licked his lips, his tongue a bright pink against the dusky rose blush of his lips. “What’s hard?”

That hit Poe very briefly, a sharp pang in his heart, a tight clenching of his gut. But he wasn’t here to pity Finn: he was here to either be with Finn or not. He reached for one of Finn’s hands and guided it towards the front of his too thin for this situation sleep pants. With the momentary contact, Poe let go of some of his steely self control. It didn’t hurt his situation any to have Finn take in a breath and stare down between them, the surprise evident on his face.

“So it’s supposed to do that?” Finn asked, his voice quiet. His hand wasn’t moving from where Poe had placed it and maybe, just maybe, Poe had overestimated his own self control. “I… I thought it was maybe a malfunction I was having, but then in the closet I felt you…”

When Finn looked up, his eyes meeting Poe’s, so unsure and fragile like a baby bird. Poe couldn’t help himself: he leaned in and kissed Finn. He ached for more, for it to be faster, harder but though it made his muscles all but tremble he kept it short and hopefully sweet.

Finn’s eyes were open, watching him carefully when Poe opened his eyes to check on the other man. “I think,” Finn said, “that was a good kiss.”

_Finn_

A smile overtook Poe’s face. It slowly pulled his lips at the corners and crinkles lines away from the edges of his eyes. There was a mirthful glimmer in his eyes when he said: “Yeah?”

“Um, yeah,” Finn said, swallowing and feeling like his pants might be getting awfully tight. “What next?”

Poe raised an eyebrow and laughed. “I guess I shouldn’t be surprised,” he said. “I’d probably be eager too if I’d spent twenty-some years locked up in a white box.”

Finn licked his lips and squirmed against the wall. “I mean. What is the point of it getting…”

“Hard?” Poe prompted, with a grin. “Its purpose is to be pleasurably fooled into thinking it is procreating.”

What a strange thing to say. “Why fool it? Why not just use it for procreation?” Finn’s fingers, where they still rested against the growing bulge in Poe’s pants, twitched minutely. This small motion wiped the grin wholly from Poe’s face in an extremely fascinating way. Finn used his shoulder blades to lever his back off the wall just a little, his interest piqued.

Maybe that was why.

“Do you like that?” Finn asked, searching Poe’s eyes for the answer. Instead of twitching his fingers, this time Finn thought about that one night on the Resistance base, waiting to talk to Poe, that he had dared to touch himself so briefly. “Do you want to be… pleasurably fooled?”

Poe opened his mouth, probably trying to say something cocky and self-assured but Finn had an idea. What he had liked had been when his hand had slid from base to tip and so Finn did just that. Poe gasped sharply and his eyelids fluttered closed for a brief second before they flew open. He
stared at Finn with a new respect. “I don’t believe it. You’re a fucking tease,” he said and pulled Finn’s hand by the wrist to the wall above his head. “Let’s play fair, eh?”

“Fair?” Finn asked, trying to move his other hand in. He’d liked the way Poe had looked when he had done that just now and wanted to do it again, but Poe trapped both of his hands above his head. It wasn’t that Finn couldn’t easily escape from his grasp but there was something about the way Poe pinned him against the wall with his chest and slide a leg between Finn’s thighs that made him gasp.

He didn’t know that when someone else touched you it felt so different. He could vividly remember the feeling of briefly rubbing himself through his pants but this experience was so different that he couldn’t even quantify it. His eyes felt like they were locked onto Poe’s half-lidded ones as the pilot levered himself in a way that slid fabric and cock against each other in an excruciatingly pleasurable way. Finn gasped again and felt his head hit the wall behind him as his neck suddenly forgot how to hold itself up.

“Hmmm,” Poe hummed and started kissing Finn’s neck. The tingle of nerves made Finn gasp again, his muscles drawing themselves tight and somehow melting at the same time. “How’s that?” He asked, the breath of his words caressing the damp marks left from Poe’s lips. “You still want to know what’s next?”

“Y-yes,” Finn breathed, seeking out Poe’s mouth with his own. The kiss this time was different; it was sloppier, but no less enjoyable. Their mouths met in a soft embrace, and Poe gently took Finn’s lower lip into his mouth for a brief second before pulling away and coming back to his upper lip.

Poe’s tongue flicked out along the line of Finn’s mouth and Finn found himself greedily opening up to have Poe search out his insides. It felt like his mouth, his skin, his cock was on fire, throbbing to the beat of his heart, to the motions Poe was making with his tongue. Finn followed it back and discovered with surprise that he really liked the taste of Poe’s mouth, how sweet and indescribably good the other man tasted.

“Poe,” Finn groaned softly when they pulled apart.

“Yeah, buddy,” Poe breathed into his ear, placing a kiss near the earlobe. “You want more?”

“M-more?” Finn stammered. His muscles were all quivering and he honestly wasn’t sure how much longer he could stay standing without something to hold onto. He felt Poe’s fingers lace between his above his head and bit back a moan when Poe moved the leg between his again. “H-how can there be more?”

“Finn, buddy,” Poe said, “I think you’re long past due for an education.”

“Wh,” Finn started to ask something, maybe, but he lost his train of thought off a cliff when Poe slid one hand between them. Where could he be going with that? Surely he wasn’t going to touch him there with his hand. He stiffened in surprise when Poe’s hand didn’t stop, squeezed its way past the waistband of his pants and inside his underwear.

“Woah, what, what are you doing?” Finn asked, mouth working to form more words that his brain could not supply. There was a short somewhere in his circuitry that was taking control of his mind and it was definitely coming from his penis which he had never known to act so erratically before.

Except in the closet on the Death Star.
And whenever Poe looked at him across the room.

Or touched him.

Or touched him.

He found it difficult to maintain the focus necessary to articulate his feelings when Poe grumbled at the catch on Finn’s pants. He found it challenging when Poe wrapped a cool hand around his shaft and absolutely strenuous when Poe’s other hand reached around to cup his testicles—oh.

He swallowed time and found his breath catching in his throat at the new sensations, at the way his world was on fire. His hands fell to Poe’s shoulders to steady himself on his feet, his thighs felt tense and wobbly at the same time, the arches of his feet even tingled like he was standing on some great precipice.

“You’ve never done this to yourself?” Poe asked, his eyes searching Finn’s for something Finn didn’t know how to say. He was just standing there, holding all of Finn’s intimate parts in his hands gently, like he thought he might break Finn in some way.

Finn found that he was breathing quite hard now, and starting to feel sweat trickle down the back of his neck. “I—” he started, choking on the word when Poe’s thumb traced the base of his cock where the hair curled out from his body. “Not really. They didn’t let us— and there wasn’t any time— and it never acted like this until I met you.”

“Oh?” Poe asked, leaning towards Finn slowly like he might kiss him again. Could one die from having too many things happen at once? A kiss, a hand on his penis? Another on his balls which he’d known hurt if they got hit but he hadn’t known that they could feel like this, he never felt this way in the shower and if he had noticed it twitching he would have hid it in embarrassment from the other Troopers.

But Poe made a contemplative sound in the back of his throat when he kissed Finn gently. He didn’t look like he thought Finn looked shameful, in his room with his cock out and... hard. “Hm,” he murmured as he looked down between them. He moved his hand gently up the shaft and Finn felt his shoulders curve in on themselves as though he were a marionette. “You’re bone dry. Good thing I didn’t throw out my lube or we’d be in a real pickle here. Well, not really,” Poe said almost to himself. He took his hands off Finn who grabbed for Poe desperately at the missing contact.

“No,” his cock told his brain. *Get back here.*

“What,” Finn said, following Poe across the room almost as a reflex.

Poe smiled at him and gestured to his bed. He sat on the edge and reached for something in a drawer under the bed frame. Finn frowned at the bed and looked down at himself. What an awkward way to be dressed.

He went to do up his pants but Poe looked up from his search. “Woah no you don’t,” Poe said, reaching forward to tug Finn by a belt loop closer. “Sit down here.”

“But my…” Finn said. “I’m exposed…”

“You said you wanted to know what came next,” Poe said. “Watch out, I’m about to get really distracting here.”

Finn frowned. Really distracting?
Poe reached behind his neck to pull his shirt off and once again Finn was staring at Poe’s naked chest. Then Poe put aside the small bottle he’d retrieved from under his bed and wriggled out of his pants.

Now he had on no shirt and no pants, just underwear that really was not performing its duties in regards to concealing Poe’s dick in any way, shape or form. Then he pulled those off too!

“You’re naked!” Finn stated, torn between staring at Poe and watching his own penis. It had previously shrunk a bit during the clothing crisis but was coming back to life with a vengeance.

“And I can see that you like it, so thanks for the compliment,” Poe said. “No clothes means nothing in the way.”

“In the way of what?” Finn asked. He was overdressed for this situation. Like, way overdressed.

“Why don’t you take your clothes off and come find out?” Poe asked. He seemed very sure of himself, like Finn wasn’t going to say no.

And was he going to? His cock certainly seemed interested in the proceedings. Perhaps he should let it get its way and see what came of it. “Okay,” he said. He started with his pants since they were almost already off anyway. He folded them neatly and placed them on the floor next to his shoes with socks tucked into them. Then he pulled off his jacket, found a hook on the wall to hang it from. His shirt he carefully removed as well: it was made of a thin fabric that he hadn’t been able to tear yet but which always felt like it might come apart at the seams. And that just left his underwear too, which wasn’t covering anything either. This too he folded and placed square on top of the beige shirt and pants pile.

“Okay,” Finn said again, blinking with surprise when he saw Poe grinning at him from the bed.

“What?”

“First of all, you look a damn sight better than you did last time I saw you with no clothes on,” Poe said, eyes greedily scanning up and down Finn’s body, quelling the urge Finn had to cover himself with his hands.

Finn came towards the bed, unsure of where he should sit. He always slept with clothes on and had never really been naked outside of the showers except for when the Resistance had put him in the bacta suit post-lightsaber wound.

“Is there a second of all?” Finn asked, one naked man sitting next to another on a bed that he now noticed was bigger than the one in his own personal room. This one could easily fit two people lying next to each other.

“Second of all,” Poe said, “I liked watching you fold your clothes. You make me smile.”

Finn now also noticed that Poe had flung his clothes across the room where they lay on the floor in an undignified heap. They were definitely a sharp contrast to his very neat pile of clothing.

“Third?” he asked, breath catching when Poe reached out to run a hand down Finn’s arm.

“Third of all?” Poe said, almost like a question. He guided Finn on the bed until Finn was laying on his back with Poe hovering above him. His penis was almost aching now like it might explode out of the skin. He almost couldn’t believe it was the same penis it had been a few minutes ago. How far could skin really stretch? “I think I’d like to try and make you come until you scream. How does that sound?”

“It sounds painful,” Finn admitted, but he was also not really paying full attention to what Poe was
saying, his eyes focused on Poe’s cock which was definitely dribbling liquid out of the tip. It was shorter than his, a bit smaller now that he saw the two side by side.

“It’s not,” Poe breathed and lowered himself so that their penises were suddenly rubbing up one against the other. This was absolutely nowhere near the same as when they had pants and underwear separating them and Finn now understood very clearly that this was why Poe had requested the removal of clothing.

He breathed in short and sharp breaths, hands reaching out to grasp Poe’s hips, to pull him in closer. A building of pressure around him pulled Finn down with every movement of Poe against him.

Down, down, down.

He felt like he was running up ten flights of stairs as his thighs tensed and light exploded behind his eyes. His head fell back against the pillow and he pushed himself upwards, unable to catch a breath as he was overwhelmed in pulsating waves of pleasure.

“Oh no,” he heard himself saying weakly as his eyes came back into focus. “I’ve made a mess,” he said, looking between them where his penis had spread a viscous fluid across his stomach.

Poe snorted. “You’re just lucky your dick doesn’t leak precome like mine does,” he said. “It can be pretty inconvenient. That, by the way, was an orgasm. Your dick has officially been fooled.”

Finn noticed that while his own penis had gone a bit mushier, Poe’s penis was still hard. There was a tremor in his triceps as he held himself as still as he could above Finn. It looked like he was struggling to hold himself back and from what Finn just couldn’t say. He felt more relaxed than he ever had in his life, but the sight of Poe’s penis rutting against him brought him back to himself.

He searched briefly for the box of tissues he’d spotted when Poe had opened up that drawer under the bed and quickly cleaned up the mess on his stomach before turning his attention to Poe. The way they were positioned on the bed definitely gave Poe an advantage and Finn wondered briefly at the sweat coating the older man’s brow before he came up with a great idea.

He put a hand behind one of Poe’s thighs and the other between his shoulder blades. “What are you—” Poe started to ask but lost his voice in a surprised yelp when Finn used his hips and legs to flip them.

Now Finn was on top. And his penis was stirring once more. It felt the same as it had before, like that precipice was just out of sight but he had the map now and knew just where to find it a second time. “Can we do that again?” Finn asked, eager to repeat the experience. Would he be able to hold himself up over Poe while it was happening? He felt like he probably could, he was pretty strong.

“Fuck,” Poe said, staring between them. “To have the recovery time of a 23 year old again.”

“Hmm?” Finn asked, trying to imitate Poe’s movements from earlier. The older man let his head fall back and closed his eyes for a brief moment before reaching up to push gently at Finn’s chest.

“Hmm,” Finn hummed, concentrating on his movements.

“Stop, stop,” Poe said, pushing once more. “Come on, Finn, I’m –ah, stop, I’m supposed to be the one teaching here.”
“Oh,” Finn said and stilled. “More lessons? The last one was alright, I guess.”

“This one’ll be a fucking revelation,” Poe said. Finn watched with keen interest as Poe reached into the same drawer he’d retrieved the mysterious bottle from to pull out a foil square. It tore open at his urging and from inside came an opaque circular… thing.

“What’s that?” Finn asked, noting with chagrin that Poe was flinging the refuse with the same haphazard cares as he had his clothing. How was Poe’s room so neat and tidy if he slobbered his clothes all around his room?

“I mean, I don’t think you have anything catchable,” Poe said, “and I’m sure I don’t but I honestly don’t remember when my last checkup even was let alone if it was between now and the last time…”

He must have correctly interpreted Finn’s raised eyebrows as a complete lack of understanding because he held up the circle and said: “You can catch diseases or infections or whatever through an exchange of bodily fluids. To be safe if you don’t know your partner’s sexual history, you should use protection.”

Protection. That was a word Finn was familiar with. “Is it plastoid?” he asked, suspicious. He did like the sound of being safe. In fact, he liked it so much that he felt his penis twitch between them.

Poe snorted and expertly rolled it on over Finn’s penis. Finn jerked a bit at the contact of the cold material (some sort of vulcanized rubber from the feeling) and then really jerked back when the whole thing was on. It felt like he was being severely constricted or constrained and he found himself looking at Poe desperately. “Do I have to?” he asked, hoping he didn’t sound like he was whining but knowing that he probably did.

“Yes, buddy,” Poe said, reaching for the bottle. “I told you I don’t remember when my last appointment was. What if I have a deadly virus?”

“I guess,” Finn muttered then yelped when Poe squirted cold liquid on his penis. “What did you do that for?”

“Well,” Poe said, contemplating the bottle before clearly coming to a decision and reaching for one of Finn’s hands. “When a man and a woman do this, sometimes the woman secretes liquids that make everything easier– here, let me have your hand now, come on. Put the liquid on, it’s just lubrication, trust me.”

He did trust Poe. Even when Poe guided Finn’s now-lubricated fingers down past the pilot’s balls towards his … “In there?” Finn asked, dubious. When he accidentally brushed the skin just above Poe’s anus and heard the sharp gasp from the pilot he no longer doubted what he was doing.

“I could do it myself,” Poe said, still guiding Finn’s fingers, “but you said you wanted more of an education…”

“Does it feel good?” Finn asked, moving his fingers carefully around the clearly sensitive skin and then at Poe’s insistence dipping in. From the fluttering of his eyelids and the hitch in his breath, Finn deduced that yes it did feel good. He put in a second and a third and then had to shift forwards on the bed to get a better look at Poe’s face. In the process his fingers subconsciously curled upwards to steady his balance with an increase in grip.

The sound that came out of Poe’s mouth at that slight motion of Finn’s fingers sent a bolt of electricity that Finn felt burning his skin down from his chest straight to his groin. Poe opened his
mouth to say something but closed his eyes and moaned when Finn did it again. Finn couldn’t take 
his eyes off Poe as he moved his fingers inside the man until Poe was gasping for breath and 
pawing weakly at Finn’s wrist.

“God damn,” Poe wheezed, back arching. “Stop or I’m going to come and you won’t even get to—
Finn.”

Finn could feel the uncomfortable pressure in his dick as Poe keened beneath him again.

“Come on Finn,” Poe begged, and Finn acquiesced reluctantly.

Although, if he had known then what was going to come next he would have been lickety quick 
with no hesitation. It was definitely a shock when Poe reached for Finn’s dick again and this time 
almost sat up, grabbing for Finn’s shoulder until Finn bent over him, transfixed by Poe’s hands.

Poe fitted Finn’s cock in where his fingers had been moments ago. At first it felt nice but was 
really just a bit of pressure at the head of his penis which wasn’t much different from before when 
they’d both had pants on. But then Poe relaxed around him and Finn sucked in a breath of surprise, 
hips jerking forward as he buried himself to the hilt inside of Poe.

Poe groaned and Finn shivered at the feelings overwhelming him. He managed to let go of Poe’s 
hips, which he’d unconsciously grabbed in his surprised panic a moment before. He reached for 
Poe’s cheek with his one clean hand, choosing the one that had previously been inside of Poe to 
instead prop him up. “Sorry,” he said. “I’m sorry, I don’t—”

Poe’s eyes opened, forehead creasing down the middle. “Sorry for what? Don’t stop, I can take it.”

“Take it…” Finn said, and that little part of his brain that always whispered dirty things about 
Poe’s mouth and hands and general being told him what to do. Guided by instinct and by the 
variety of looks of pleasure on Poe’s face he pulled out until just the tip was still inside Poe and 
then he twitched forward again. He set a fairly quick rhythm, mostly because once his hips started 
moving he found that he couldn’t stop them.

He could feel his own breath in his throat, catching on the feelings of pleasure mounting within 

“Fuck,” Poe groaned back and reached up to pull Finn down in another sloppy kiss. Finn didn’t 
have his whole mind on it to be honest, as a great deal of himself was particularly invested in his 
dick which was really giving its all, trying to take him to newer and greater heights.

A vague remembering washed over Finn and he grunted, gripping Poe’s hips with one hand to 
adjust his angle slightly. Poe had one hand on Finn’s upper bicep and the other, between them, 
stroking himself to the beat of Finn’s thrusts.

“Oh shit,” Poe breathed, head falling back. Finn got his eyes back in focus in time to see Poe’s eyes 
roll up, mouth slackening around the hitching of his breath. “Fuck me.”

“I believe I am,” Finn got out before the sensations of Poe’s body clenching around him were too 
much and he was coming too, hips stuttering in their rhythm until he had spent every last drop of 
himself in his efforts.

They were silent for a few long moments, winded and breathing each other in. Poe propped himself 
up and Finn lowered himself on shaking arms to connect their mouths together once more.

“So,” Poe said, his voice quiet but raw at the edges. “Good lesson?”
“Hell yeah,” Finn said, and kissed the smile right off Poe’s face.

Poe

Poe couldn’t remember why he had been so afraid to start this. Here he was: well fucked, tucked into the bend of Finn’s body, one of the black man’s big hands wrapped across his chest like a seatbelt. They’d cleaned up and Poe had ordered them both to his bed for a good night’s sleep and maybe more, based on Finn’s ridiculous dick.

“I have to go tomorrow,” Finn said quietly, his breath brushing the back of Poe’s neck like a gentle hand.

Ah. Right. That was why he had been avoiding getting too close to anyone in the last few years. The rigors of war.

“When?” Poe asked, feeling his chest hollow out like it was being scooped out with a spoon.

“General Organa said noon,” Finn murmured. Poe ran fingers up the back of his arm along the soft hairs and softer skin. He could feel sweat starting to prickle the small of his back but didn’t move away.

“Shit, way to be a buzzkill,” Poe said. He pressed his arm along Finn’s to hold it in place when the other man made to pull it away. “No. I need you to be the big spoon. This is another lesson.”

Finn huffed out a soft breath on Poe’s neck but fell silent for a minute. “I was never allowed to do any of that before,” he said quietly. “I didn’t even understand why people would do it. Why Rose kept asking...”

Poe’s stomach froze at the mention of the woman’s name. Shit. Finn had been so close to her… Jessika had told him that Rose had kissed Finn. On the one hand, Finn was here with him, but on the other… “What exactly was she asking?”

“If I like liked you,” Finn said. “I guess I get it now. It’s a different kind of feeling. I mean, different from friendship, different from superior to subordinate… they always told us that there was only that kind of relationship in the First Order and that any deviance from the norm was punishable by...” He cleared his throat and nestled closer to Poe, nose pressed close to the base of Poe’s skull. “Well anyway. This is nice.”

Finn was incredible. Balls deep in Poe one minute, the next talking about how the First Fucking Order was ready to shoot their people if they looked at someone funny or dared to feel a single emotion. He felt the ache deep in his chest change, from regret to having taken Finn from Rose (which was a very mild and not at all bothersome ache if he was being honest with himself) to regret for all the time stolen from Finn’s life. He swallowed past a lump in his throat and hugged Finn’s arm tighter.

He felt a surge of feelings swell over him like a crashing ocean wave. What the fuck had he gotten himself into? He wasn’t supposed to be this goddamn attached to one person. It felt like he might break apart if Finn weren’t to make it back from the mission tomorrow. What would have been the point if they destroyed the First Order and he couldn’t keep doing this? He finally got it, what Leia had been saying all of those times.
If there was nothing left to live for after then what would have been the point? And here he was, finding something to live and love for. What a goddamn idiot he was.

They did fall asleep at one point, Poe realized as he woke up to the infernal racket of his own internal alarm clock. He shifted on the bed, turning from his back to his side and felt a body shift next to his, solid and warm and murmuring something inaudible.

Poe squinted down briefly at the dark brown arm that was pulling him in close and let his eyes drift shut again.

He woke up a second time to his internal alarm ringing a second time and was made aware of an insistent poking in his backside. “Hmm,” he muttered. “Good dreams?”

Finn shifted behind Poe, clearly trying to angle his hips away while still holding onto Poe. It wasn’t working. “Sorry,” he muttered. “I don’t know why it keeps doing that.”

Poe shifted towards Finn, an eyebrow raised. He could feel a smile tugging at his lips, an honest-to-god grin. “I think I do,” he said, reaching a hand towards Finn’s cock which was, without a doubt, just begging for trouble. “I think it might be looking for something.”

Finn watched him, his dark eyes fluttering closed briefly before he clearly forced them open to stare at Poe as the pilot stroked his length. “What about yours? Your cock?”

Poe shuddered, hand losing its rhythm on Finn’s cock as the other man wrapped his warm hands around Poe’s own dick. “What about it?”

“You were right,” Finn said, a bit breathily. “Yours does leak a lot.”

Poe snorted. “No shit,” he said. “Used to get me in trouble all the time. I had to order extra thick pants.”

“Hnnf,” Finn said, half-laugh and half-groan. “Extra thick.”

“Hmm,” Poe hummed, coming to a quick decision. “Scooch up.”

“What?” Finn asked, responding more to Poe’s pushing hands than his words. “What are you– Poe what’s– that doesn’t go there– oh–”

Poe smiled as he licked a stripe up Finn’s cock. The velvet skin tasted a bit salty with a hint of musk, probably from last night’s ministrations. Finn stopped talking abruptly when Poe lowered his mouth over the head. He was very quiet, so much so that Poe had to glance upwards to check on his friend.

Finn was just staring, eyes wide and mouth open. Poe came off his cock with an obscene slurping sound and cocked an eyebrow. “Good?”

Finn continued to stare, coming to himself only briefly enough to jerk his head in a nod but not quite enough to form anything resembling a word. He made a sort of choked sound when Poe lowered his head again, index and thumb around the base of Finn’s cock in a tight ring. He used his hand to stroke upwards to meet his mouth on the downstroke, starting up a rhythm that he hoped he could maintain before his jaw started to ache.

“Poe,” Finn choked, when Poe steeled himself with a deep breath and took in as much of Finn’s cock as he could.
It was a lot: Poe had a big mouth, but Finn’s dick was bigger. He remembered suddenly, vividly, the shocked look on Finn’s face when that same dick had slid home inside Poe last night, the slow burn of his long-disused muscles adjusting to the intrusion. And then, somehow Finn had picked up on all of Poe’s signals without ever having been versed in them and changed his angle…

Poe moaned around Finn’s dick, wanting to reach for his own but unable to move the arm propping him up. He swirled his tongue around the head of Finn’s cock before going down again.

“Poe,” Finn said suddenly, alarm in his voice. His hands came up, from where they’d been clenched in the sheets to pat at Poe’s head. “Poe I’m going to–”

Poe looked up from Finn’s cock without taking his mouth off it, making sure to make eye contact with the younger man before he slowly lowered his head, increasing the pressure of his suction as he did so.

Finn made an incredible choking sound and the hands on Poe’s head gripped tight as the younger man tipped his head back and thrust his hips upwards. Poe had been expecting this and relaxed his mouth, trying his damnest to tell his gag reflex to take a fiver.

He must have succeeded because he could taste Finn’s come and swallowed as best as he could, mindful of his teeth and tongue. He pulled up just a bit, fighting to keep Finn’s hips down until finally, Finn relaxed onto the bed, breathing heavily.

Poe pulled off then, all too aware of how sensitive Finn must be. He reached for one of his bedside tissues which had gotten an awful lot of use in the past few months. “How was that?” he asked, wiping away the mildly disgusting drool-cum combo from his mouth and chin.

Finn nodded like he wasn’t sure his neck could properly support his head. He still had his hands threaded through Poe’s hair and Poe reached for one of them, tangling finger around finger.

“What about you?” Finn asked, eyes hazy but determined. “Should I do that to you?”

Poe closed his eyes briefly and let his head lean on Finn’s one hand. “I for sure wouldn’t last through that,” he said softly. He didn’t know why sucking cock turned him on so much but he was achingly hard and knew it wouldn’t take much to send him over the edge. “Just… you could just touch me and I’ll probably…”

“Okay,” Finn said, reaching once more for Poe’s dick. “What do you call that one?”

“That what?” Poe asked. He could feel the orgasm inside him, in the uneven stutter of his hips forwards into the firm grip of Finn’s big hand. “Fuck.”

“What you did to me just now.” Finn said. His eyes narrowed and then he twisted his wrist so the palm of his hand cupped over the slick head of Poe’s dick on the upstroke. Poe couldn’t have held back if he wanted to and boy, did he want to.

“Fuck,” he said again, steadied by Finn’s hands on him as he came all over his fucking sheets, Finn’s legs, his own… well, it wasn’t that much cum but even a little bit was too much to have on your bedding, he knew that much.

“I thought that’s what we did last night,” Finn said, still talking as Poe floated on cloud nine. “You know, when my dick was in your…”

Poe collapsed next to Finn in their bed of filth and reached out to pull him into a kiss. “You’re awfully vocal for a guy who won’t make a sound when he’s cumming in my mouth,” he muttered.
“Yeah, that one. What’s that one called?” Finn asked, like he was compiling a sexy fucking dictionary.

“Blowjob,” Poe said, snorting again.

“Blowjob,” Finn said contemplatively. “I liked it.”

“I could tell,” Poe said with a smile. He reached out again, to fit his hand under the line of Finn’s jaw. There was some slight stubble on his cheeks which came as a bit of a shock: Poe had only seen Finn with a little bit of facial hair once before and that had been during their mission together.

The mission…

Poe leaned past Finn to check the clock and closed his eyes.

“What?” Finn asked, glancing over his shoulder to take a look at the time. “Oh.”

“We should get up,” Poe said, looking around them. He felt old suddenly, like his heart had aged a hundred years in the time it had taken him to look at the clock. “You said you have to go at noon… you should get ready.”

“When do you start flying usually?” Finn asked. “Won’t they be looking for you?”


_Finn_

Of course, when they did manage to get their clothes on between stolen kisses and fleeting touches, Poe was proven to be a huge liar. He’d given Finn one last kiss before gathering up his sheets. “Gotta wash this shit,” he’d said, with a raised eyebrow that told Finn he was definitely thinking about how he’d orgasmed all over them.

Finn had swallowed hard, wondering at his penis which was twitching again. And then Poe had opened the door to reveal a cross-armed Jessika Pava.

“Busy night, eh boys?” Jess said, her eyebrow raised like she was definitely thinking about all of their orgasms.

At that, Finn was a bit surprised to see Poe blush a bright beet red from his cheeks to his ears. “Wh– Jess,” he stammered, blush not lessing with any of his words. “What are you...”

“It’s nine thirty, jackass,” she said to Poe. She looked around him and smirked at Finn. “Just making sure you didn’t expire overnight. Hi, Finn.”

Finn raised a hand in a wave.

“Well mind your own fucking business,” Poe snapped.

“What,” Jessika drawled. “Like that sounds like something I’d fucking do. Get your ass in the showers and get to the fucking hangars, boss. And don’t take too much goddamn time in there. We’ve got some fancy fucking moves to try out today.”
Poe glowered at Jessika, still a bright red. When she finally wigged her fingers in a wave and sauntered off, he turned to look at Finn. “Sorry,” he said, his blush fading but only a little. “They’re all so fucking nosy.”

“Hm,” Finn said. “She’s your friend, isn’t she?”

“Some friend,” Poe muttered, leading the way out into the hallway. Finn was definitely ready for a hot shower, especially if Poe was going to be there. Poe pulled open one of the laundry chutes and deposited his sheets inside.

“Well she seemed happy for you,” Finn said. “I mean, happy that you had so many orgasms.”

Poe closed the laundry chute a bit too quickly, jerking his hand back from being pinched. “Ow, shit. Finn, you can’t just say things like that!”

Finn shrugged and raised his eyebrows, hoping he came across as the picture of innocence. He started off towards the showers without waiting for Poe. “You didn’t have time last night to teach me about social decorum,” he said. “I think we’re going to have to save that one for later.”

“What?!” Poe asked, jogging to catch up. “I can teach you that right now, just fucking watch me.”

“I was hoping we’d be learning something else in the shower,” Finn said matter-of-factly. He was still ahead of Poe and smiled when he heard spluttering from behind him.

He definitely got why people wanted to be in romantic relationships. It was an awful lot of fun so far.

The very unfun part came just before noon when Finn’s team was assembled at the foot of the TIE transport the Resistance had managed to hijack. They were just about to board when a shout came across the hangar, from none other than Jessika Pava.

“Don’t leave!” she said, leaping out of her X-Wing and making a beeline across the bay.

Finn frowned at her but nodded to his two compatriots. “I’ll be right there,” he said to them before turning to Jessika. “The General said we had to leave at noon. It’s noon.”

“Okay,” Jessika said, rolling her eyes. “But Poe’s about to land and I know he wants to say goodbye. Just go to his X-Wing okay? I’ll cover for you.”

“Oh,” Finn said, blinking in surprise. He’d been a bit nervous when he’d seen Poe flying away, wondering if he was going to be able to say anything more to the pilot before leaving. He might not come back, after all. Maybe neither of them would.

Jessika gave Finn a mighty shove in the direction of the black X-Wing just pulling into the hangar and so Finn went. He was a bit surprised to feel his heart pounding in his chest, sweat tickling the back of his neck where the stiff, First Order lieutenant collar was tight against his skin.

He saw the cockpit open and BB-8 lowered to the ground before he saw Poe hop out. “Poe!” he heard himself say and then he was running until Poe caught him, the hard plastoid of his vitals pack pressing against his ribcage. Poe’s arms around him held tight and Finn breathed in the sticky, sweaty, greasy smell of Poe’s neck. Beneath the smells of pilot and X-Wing was that pine-fresh smell of the Yavin 4 soap. Finn tried to commit it to his memory, releasing the pilot very reluctantly.

“Sorry,” he said, in response to the bright blush staining Poe’s cheeks. “Jessika said you would
want to say goodbye and I for sure wanted to…”

Poe shook his head, his dark brown eyes closing briefly before opening to stare at Finn fiercely. “I did,” he said softly. “Want to say that. Not goodbye, hopefully, but see you soon.”

“Soon,” Finn said, forehead creasing. They couldn’t guarantee such a thing, not in these times of war. But he could see in Poe’s face that glimmer of hope that all the Resistance fighters carried with them. Hope that one day they wouldn’t be fighting some mysterious enemy but laughing together in times of peace.

“Soon,” Poe said, and from his mouth it sounded like a promise. Poe leaned his forehead against Finn’s briefly. “Soon.”

Finn couldn’t help himself: he felt the fire burning in his stomach and in the bottoms of his feet. “Soon,” he said, cupping a hand around the back of Poe’s head. He leaned forward and kissed the pilot, hoping he could communicate all of his feelings towards the man in the soft press of his lips.

*Come back to me.*

*I can’t wait to see you again.*

*I love you.*

“Soon,” he said again when he pulled away. He could feel his heart clenched in his chest like this was a goodbye. He just couldn’t shake the bad feeling that the First Order was going to win this one. But he didn’t say that, just squeezed Poe’s hands and walked away towards their transport, towards the mission.

Away from Poe.
It was always difficult to rein in your thoughts when the sounds that accompanied a battle could be so deafening.

They were in space, of course, in the vacuum, but the interior of the cockpits were not themselves a vacuum. Poe could always hear every rattle and creak, and trying to take note of each one and listening to the comms and focusing on the beetle-thick clouds of TIE fighters and keeping in mind their ultimate goal could really take a toll on a fighter pilot’s psyche.

The best of them could keep a sense of detachment and let their subconscious focus on a few of the things: for Poe he had to cycle between them quickly enough that he could keep his whole mind open and focused on every little thing happening.

“Black Leader: on your six.”

“I’ve got it. Asshole. Sir, we’re approaching our target.”

“This isn’t going to work.”

“BB-8 you’ve got this,” Poe said, giving himself a nanosecond to check his bearings. A wing of five TIE fighters was approaching them from the rear. A trio of cannons were on the surface of the Death Star, all pointing their way as they stood guard against the opening into the inner structure. Black Two was to port, Black Three just behind him on the starboard side.

“No no no, I do not got this, fighter to port.”

“We’ll make a pass now, I’ll target the first cannon. Watch my back,” he said, pushing the throttle forwards to speed up his ship. She could handle anything he threw at him so long as he kept her in good condition. He braced his feet on the floor and whipped past the cannons, pulling back hard and dipping down to do an about-face before firing on cannon one. It didn’t have time to turn around before it exploded and through the debris he saw that he had a shot at the second cannon and fired.

“Pull up, pull up!” Black Two said, her voice garbled over the comms. There must be interference from the Death Star’s shields. “The fuckers are on me! Someone help.”

“On it,” Poe said, eyes on his next target, hands on the throttle instinctively following his visual path: the three TIE fighters speeding like demons towards Black Two. “Target the third cannon, Black Two.”

“Copy that,” she said, and Black Three followed her as they made a pass at the cannon. Poe shot two TIE fighters. He had to do a quick wingover to barrel around a third, mind on the path his passes could take him between, through, around.

“Cannon destroyed,” Black Three reported as Poe got the third TIE fighter in his sights.
Five of them at least were coming after him but he fired off his shot, destroying the one before he sped away. “Regroup, on me,” he said. “Take out as many fighters as you can but it’s now or never. We’re going in.”

“Copy that,” Black Two said.

“Roger,” Black Three said.

He saw them take out the ships but another two clusters of TIE fighters were converging on the trio. There weren’t enough of them: a cloud of TIE fighters was attacking the bomber they’d brought with them, and it could only be a matter of time before it was fully destroyed. They’d have to engage with them if the destruction of the Death Star didn’t cause as much chaos as he was hoping it would.

“Ready for the flight of your lives?” Poe asked, eyes narrowing. They sped for the entry port, compensating for the planet-like rotation of the Death Star and then they were in.

Their appearance had been enough of a surprise for them to get quite a lot accomplished in such a short time but the Stormtroopers and TIE pilots in the Death Star had obviously been told to expect something because they had been almost as ready as if they’d been radioed ahead. The extra few seconds had bought the Resistance fighters enough time to clear themselves a path into the Death Star though.

Poe sensed something coming towards him, whether it was peripherals, BB-8 or just an intuition. He twitched his throttle, careening to the side as a TIE fighter barrelled past him. He shot it down and flew through the wreckage, wincing as a piece of debris clipped his wing. It wasn’t enough to damage them too badly but BB-8 chirped its frustration at both the reckless flying and the debris.

“I hear you, buddy,” Poe said, his entire focus on maintaining his speed through the inner structure of the Death Star. He’d memorized as much of the plans as he could and managed to avoid the few architectural surprises in their way as they navigated through the ship. He’d run his recruits through as many sim-runs as they could handle and he heard them report in the background, still with him.

“Two on me, two on me!!” Black Three suddenly reported, panic in his voice. At the next intersection Poe thought quickly and came up with a decision. He hammered on the throttle and tucked the nose of his ship around. For the split second it took to take down the two TIES he felt his momentum carry him through to the next maze of columns and walls and shrugged.

“You’re my eyes here, buddy,” he told BB-8, mentally reversing his simulated runs through the Death Star as he flew backwards.

BB-8 complained as noisily as it could; how Poe could be so reckless, watch out for that pole, couldn’t he fly normally for once, 0.2 degrees up, it would all be so much easier if he would just 7 degrees left and an immediate 2 degrees right and there was the last intersection before they reached the inner core so could he please turn around please.

“All right, alright,” Poe said, adrenaline pumping through his veins. “Never done that before!”

“What?? And you did it anyway?” Black Two asked, her voice astonished.

“You’re crazy, man,” Black Three said, and belatedly, “Thanks though.”

“We’re coming up on it!” Poe said, and then they were in. The reactor core hung in front of them, a blazing fire of pure energy. They said it was powered by the same thing as a lightsaber but that
since it wasn’t constantly being controlled by a jedi it was much more unstable and a certain amount of added power would cause it to fire out of control.

Poe remembered Finn, picking up the blue lightsaber on Takodana, his eyes focused on a Stormtrooper with an electro-blade. He’d figured out how it had worked as easily as he had handled Poe’s cock, his hands slick with precome and—

“Boss!” Black Two shouted in time for Poe to see the TIE fighter coming at him. He let Black One fall a few feet and saw the fighter crash right into the reactor core. “Right,” he said. “Fire!”

His recruits did just that and within seconds Poe could feel the energy swelling in front of them, the first signs of the reactor breaking apart. “Abandon ship!” he said, letting the two recruits go first this time. Yes, they might be running into an ambush of TIE fighters just outside the Death Star but he also wanted to make sure they cleared the blast radius.

It was like a wall of fire behind them, hot and angry and hungry for fuel. The reactor spat and growled and burned around them. Poe felt the emptiness of space around them as they shot out of the Death Star and heard himself shout the orders to jump to lightspeed, all of them in a detached way as he turned back for one last look at the moon-sized starship, glowing like the noonday sun on Yavin 4.

He felt the pull of lightspeed tug them away, the bombing ship following close behind and managed to catch a last, drawn-out look at the Death Star as it burst into a cacophony of plastoid and plastiron.

“One down, nine to go,” he said to BB-8. His recruits were still alive, even. Maybe they could actually pull this one off. “Where to next, buddy?”

**Finn**

Their entry into the Death Star this time was...well, Finn wouldn’t specifically say ‘catastrophic’ or ‘abysmal’ but it certainly was neither smooth nor simple.

The radio transmission welcoming their transport onboard the Death Star said nothing about the platoon lying in wait inside the cargo hangar, guns trained on the ship.

“Shit,” one of Finn’s compatriots, a spy named Opheela. “Shit!”

“Calm down O,” the other, a large black man named Kyron snapped. “Pull yourself together.”

“But they’re waiting!” Opheela insisted.

“We knew this might happen,” Kyron insisted. He turned to Finn, his bright blue eyes unnervingly calm considering the circumstances. “Finn, what do you think we should do?”

All three of them had congregated in the cockpit when Opheela had sent the news of their welcoming party over the comm system. Finn tapped the toe of his shiny boot on the floor. “Hide?” he asked.

Opheela blinked at him and then started pressing buttons and flicking switches. “Autopilot engaged,” she said. “Let’s go, let’s fucking go.”
With that decision made, the three of them spent the next ten seconds searching for a compartment or cabin they could hide in. They had decided to all hide in the same place, with Finn being the winner of finding hiding places.

It was cramped, to say the least, in the trash chute. And stinky. “Ew Kyron,” Opheela hissed from her position at the top of the chute. They were bracing themselves in the chute with their arms and legs, hoping to the stars above that the ship landed smoothly and without anyone staring at the chutes at its rear end.

“It’s not me,” Kylo hissed back. “Get your foot off my head.”

Finn tapped his leg three times in their pre-discussed signal for absolute silence. He could hear someone below, a Stormtrooper maybe. Probably a maintenance worker. They were talking to someone...no, just talking generally into their helmet.

Light flooded into the chute and Finn dropped and rolled to the side, gritting his teeth at both the light and jarring impact. Being dressed as a First Order lieutenant probably saved his ass because the Stormtrooper did nothing but stare long enough for Kyron to drop and shoot him with an electroshock.

Finn moved towards the Trooper, catching him as he fell and carefully levering him into the trash bin he was carrying. Both he and Kyron hopped in and ducked low, Opheela in Stormtrooper gear pushed the bin and its cargo away from the ship.

_That was easy_, Finn thought to himself but heard someone call a Stormtrooper callsign. “That’s you,” he hissed up at Opheela.

“She,” she whispered back and then turned to salute. “Yes sir,” she said, making her voice as low as she could.

“You forgot to close the chute, soldier,” the voice said, clearly annoyed. “Don’t let it happen again. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes sir,” Opheela, without swearing or adding any unnecessary descriptions at all. Finn was impressed and proud although he should have expected as much from a spy. Hopefully the officer hadn’t noticed the heap of bodies in the trash bin or the fact that Opheela was clearly not the male Stormtrooper who had been sent to the ship.

Since no shouts of discovery or alarm followed them, Finn thought it was safe to assume that they had not been caught. Opheela pushed them into a room off the main hallway, presumably one labeled with the maintenance insignias.

“Clear,” she said when she slid the door shut behind them. “Shit! That was close! I can’t believe that guy didn’t catch us.”

“Why?” Kyron asked, heaving the unconscious Stormtrooper out of the bin before reaching in a hand to help haul Finn out. The man was both huge and strong.

“Because I am a girl,” Opheela said. “I thought for sure he would notice.”

“Huh?” Kyron asked, not having been present at their Stormtrooper training sessions because he simply couldn’t fit in any of the gear they had access to. “But they all look the same...no offense, Finn.”

Opheela waved a hand like Finn should take offense. “The groins are totally different, Ky.”
Kyron rolled his eyes. “In that case let me apologize as I do not have the vaguest interest in groins, male or female. Now. What should we do with this unfortunate soul?” Kyron asked.

Finn hated the idea of blowing up potentially innocent-through-brainwashing First Order soldiers badly enough but an unconscious one? “Could you knock him out again if we woke him up?”

Kyron eyed the Trooper and then looked at Finn. “We’re on the clock here, Finn,” he said, almost gently.

“I know,” Finn said. “Doesn’t he at least deserve a chance?”

Kyron and Opheela exchanged a Resistance Fighter Trying To Discuss Something With Finn Look. “Sure,” Kyron said finally. “But if he screams or anything-“

“Finn’s not an idiot, Ky,” Opheela muttered, going over to the door to stand watch.

Finn removed the Trooper’s helmet and shook the man. He had a light tan skin that reminded him of his friend Slip. Finn smiled sadly at the memory and shook the man again.

“Oh!” The man started in shock, eyes wide when Finn slapped a hand over his mouth.

“Shh,” Finn said, a finger on his lips. He gauged the man’s reaction and removed his covering hand.

“Who are you people?” the Trooper asked. “What do you want with me?”

“To give you a chance,” Finn said.

The Trooper propped himself up on his elbows and looked from Finn to Kyron to Opheela, eyes widening. “You’re… you’re with the Resistance. Aren’t you?”

“Yes,” Finn said.

The Stormtrooper’s eyes closed briefly, a look of pain on his face. “I thought they were lying when they told us you would be coming to blow up the base.”

“We are not here specifically to kill people,” Finn said, “but the First Order is. And I think you know it.”

“We don’t kill,” the Stormtrooper said. “We liberate them.”

“From what? Their freedom?” Kyron asked, with a derisive snort.

The Stormtrooper frowned. “No, from… factions…”

“It’s all a lie, bucko,” Opheela said from the door. “I’d say we’ve got two minutes, gents.”

“A lie? They wouldn’t lie to us,” the Stormtrooper said.

“Well they do,” Finn said. “And I would know.”

The Trooper’s eyes fixed on Finn, no longer flicking between him and the others. “You’re him. FN-2187. They don’t want us talking about you. You helped destroy the Starkiller base.”

“I left because my first mission to a planet was to slaughter a village of innocent people. They told us they were dangerous rebels but then they had us shoot down men, women, children. Most of
which had no weapons and no defenses,” Finn said. “Starkiller base contained many willing participants to many such slaughters and worse, it was built to more efficiently complete such tasks. Just like this Death Star is.”

“What about the people who didn’t choose to be there? What about those of us here, now? With nowhere else to go?” The Trooper was sitting up now, eyes blazing. “What about the disorder and chaos the Resistance sows across the galaxy?”

“Disorder and chaos go hand-in-hand with freedom,” Finn said quietly. “If you can’t allow people their freedom then–”

“Freedom to what, murder? Steal? Rape?” The Stormtrooper spat on the ground at Finn’s feet. “What’s so good about that?”

“The First Order does all of that too,” Finn said. “But what they don’t do is let people have the rest of life. Laughter, happiness. Love.”

“I could sound the alarm,” the Trooper warned. “I’ll scream for help.”

“If you try that,” Kyron warned with his big arms folded across his chest, “I will shoot you down.”

Finn sighed. He’d definitely pictured himself speaking to all of the disillusioned Stormtroopers and convincing them to join the Resistance or at least to leave the First Order. “I’m not saying you have to join us,” he said, that thought sparking an idea. “But just think: you could walk away from all of this and have your own life. Free of the plastoid, free of always wearing a helmet, free of putting your life in danger for the profit of some slimy higher-ups who sit behind blaster-proof glass.”

The Stormtrooper didn’t say anything to that and Finn supposed he’d done all he could. “Think about it,” he said and nodded to Kyron. If the Stormtrooper was knocked out he’d probably wake up before the ship exploded. If Kyron chose to kill him now? There wasn’t much Finn could do about it.

“Let’s go,” Opheela said quietly, sliding away from the door. Her movements were like a snake in the water: smooth and deadly. “We’ve got a date with destiny.”

Poe

The first Death Star had been relatively easy to destroy compared to the second. His team had transported themselves through space to reach a debris field: obviously Jessika’s team had succeeded in their intended destruction. They’d followed the order that General Organa had imposed on them to ensure that any team needing backup got it in a timely fashion.

Technically the second Death Star that Poe helped to destroy was the fourth one on their list. Out of ten, it was supposed to be one of the easier ones to destroy but all of the fighter pilots had noticed the same flaw in their plan: the fourth Death Star while architecturally identical to the other six it resembled, it was orbiting a small planet that Poe knew to be full of innocent people.

A destructive explosion the size of a Death Star happening so close to a small planet… it could be just as deadly to the inhabitants as a strike from the superlaser. The Resistance engineers had capitulated that the Death Star’s own shields could be theoretically engaged if a remote device was dropped in place, thereby protecting the planet nearby from the largest burst of energy from the
explosion.

The First Order was clearly aware of this as the plans showed the other Death Stars slowly being moved into similar positions throughout the galaxy.

When Poe’s wing of three appeared at the fourth Death Star, he saw utter chaos. “Black Leader, standing by,” he said.

The comms were quiet for gut-wrenching moment and then finally: “Cutlass Leader, standing by. Black Leader you are clear to engage. Take the upper right quadrant.” Bastian’s voice was like sun on a rainy day.

“Orange Leader here,” Jessika said through the comms. “Good to see you in one piece, Poe.”

“Glad to hear your voices,” Poe said. “Black two, three, converge on the cannons. What’s your 20, Jess?”

“I’ve got one down,” Jessika reported. “Bas has two. We got here just in time to save his sorry ass. We’re on the planet side of this motherfucker.”

“They’re on us like syrup on a hotcake,” Bas said. “Poe, clear those cannons and give me a straight shot in. We’re lucky I was the one carrying the remotes and detonation devices or we’d all be fucked.”

“Copy that, you need a spotter?” Poe asked.

“If you wouldn’t mind,” Bas said.

Poe tipped a hand at Bas when the other pilot pulled up beside him. They probably had just the one chance to do a big rush into this colossal death machine before they were caught. The TIE fighters hovering around the entrance to the Death Star were a bit intimidating but only because of their numbers.

Poe took a deep breath as his team members took out the cannons. He had always been good at dodging blasts in space except that one time around Jakku, but he felt like he had a handful of reasons why. BB-8 had been trapped on the planet and the sexiest Stormtrooper he’d ever seen had just rescued him from certain death. Anyone would have been distracted by that.

“In we go,” Poe said. He shot mindlessly, his eyes and fingers in sync as he damaged and destroyed TIE fighters. He used to always shoot for an explosion but ever since Finn had defected from the First Order he had a hard time forgetting that there were faces behind the cockpits.

“I’m in,” Bas reported. “Shit! They’re everywhere. Poe I–” the comm cut out and Poe veered hard to starboard, barrelreng into the tiny entrance. He saw five TIE fighters hovering around Bas’ ship, converging their fire on him as he dodged in the cramped space as best as he could. His communications must have been shot off: Poe saw Bas’ R1 unit swiveling its head in alarm but the ship was still intact. Poe’s presence startled two of the TIE fighters into holding their fire: he downed those two at once. Bas was able to then turn and take out one while Poe shot again and again, doing his damndest to avoid hitting his friend.

“–it, shit, shit, fuck! That was close,” Bas said, voice full of relief as his comms came back on.

“Let’s get in and get out,” Poe said. “This ship stinks of sabotage.”

Bas agreed and zoomed off, Poe close behind him. They were able to fend off a second similar
attack and help with a third before they finally got to the reactor core. This one was strangely blue, not the usual red of the superlasers. They didn’t have time to contemplate the oddity though: Bas dropped his load, shouting out the time to detonation as they sped away. They had to drop the remote shield at the farthest edge so this time Poe led the way.

Black sky loomed before them as they shot out, Bas engaging the remote shield behind them. The explosion would take out the shielding for sure but it would at least give the planet below a chance.

“Goddamnit,” Jess said, before they all jumped to light speed to tackle the next Star. “I’m going to need a fucking drink after this shitshow.”

“Then let’s get it the fuck over with,” Bas said.

“We’re jumping to the fifth position,” Poe said. “One through four are taken care of.”

“Copy that, Black Leader,” Jessika said, and they leapt away.

Finn

Finn huddled beneath the skeletal plastiron walkway, trying to remain as inconspicuous as possible. He had known, somewhere deep inside, that there was no way a mission of this magnitude could go smoothly and precisely.

Kyron had elected to incapacitate the Stormtrooper and had secured him to a large shelving unit in the maintenance closet. He had reasoned to Finn that if he was willing to escape with them they would pick him up on their way out.

They had cautiously entered the inner hull and had climbed a thousand and forty rungs. Finn could only speak for himself and his own burning muscles and freezing fingers and toes, but from the look on the others’ faces when they had entered the corridor leading to the reactor, Finn had guessed that they felt close to the same.

That was really when things had gone sideways. Opheela had crossed the corridor swiftly, entering into the room that according to their plans held the reactor core. She had gestured for Kyron to follow, eyes searching the corridor for any signs of life.

Unfortunately, the second Kyron’s bulk had removed itself from the shadows they were hiding in, a First Order lieutenant opened a door a few yards away and turned to stare.

“Who are you?” the lieutenant asked, eyes wide. The man looked from Kyron’s incredibly suspicious face to the blaster he’d purloined from the Stormtrooper and then back up to his face.

“Guards!” he had shouted, before Kyron could take him out. The man fell silent but Finn could hear the telltale stomp of plastoid boots on the ground coming from the room the lieutenant had emerged from.

Kyron turned back to Finn, eyes stricken before running down the hallway as quickly as he could. Finn could only duck back into the shadows and wait as a group of ten Stormtroopers chased after him.

When they had left, Opheela beckoned again from across the corridor. “Hurry!” she hissed, and
Finn did so. There were no more shouts of recognition but Finn was hit with a sick feeling when he saw the fallen lieutenant on the floor.

He assumed both that the man was dead and that Kyron, if he actually managed to escape, would meet the two of them at their rendezvous point in the hangar.

“They’ll be coming here next,” Opheela whispered, leading into the air ducts around the Core chamber. She had the explosive devices in her pack, but she stopped when both of them were safely in the duct and she handed Finn half of them.

“What’s this?” Finn asked, more than a bit alarmed.

“In case they catch one of us,” Opheela said very seriously. “Someone has to set these off. And the other person might as well have an insurance policy with them. If we can’t hit the core head on maybe we can damage the ship enough to set the First Order back a few weeks.”

“Oh,” Finn said quietly.

They didn’t talk until they reached a vent looking out over the reactor core. There were guards in the chamber, maybe fifty or more, all milling about in organized patterns, all armed to the teeth. The two of them retreated a few feet so they wouldn’t be talking right at the opening.

Opheela hung her head. “We can plant the explosives in the air ducts… I think their blast range is large enough to affect the core even from here,” she whispered. “But someone’s going to have to disable the shields.”

“I see the computers,” Finn muttered. “They have some serious firepower pointed at them.”

“To take out anyone who tries to get near them?” Opheela asked.

“Or the computers themselves,” Finn said. “Whatever protocols in place will be passed to the next available terminal which could be any one of the terminals on the ship. If the shields are disabled first then we’d really have a good shot at this.”

“We’re going to need a distraction,” Opheela muttered. “We really could use Kyron right about now.”

Finn briefly considered abandoning their mission, since he personally couldn’t see a good way out of this situation they were in. But there was a reason Opheela was the leader of their small crew. She thought briefly and then came up with a decision.

“Okay. We’re going to plant all of the explosives here except for one,” she said. “I’m going to take it far enough away that it won’t trigger these ones. I can modify the detonator to just set off a single explosive. When we think our backup has arrived I’ll set off this set and hopefully the guards will leave without blowing up that computer. You go in, take down the shields and get the fuck out. If you can disable the computers fine.”

She hesitated for a moment, then put a hand on Finn’s shoulder. Her nails were bright red and sharp, great for rewiring bombs. “We don’t have comms like the pilots do so we’ll be solo from this point on. May the Force be with you, Finn.”

Finn nodded, throat tight. He watched Opheela as she retreated and then set about placing his explosives. Despite what she had said about placing all of them he kept one on him, hoping that when he was at the terminal he could place one explosive closer to the core to ensure that it would be properly destroyed.
It almost looked like they had added a few more crystals to the design of this core, he thought to himself as he squinted at the core. He could only get so close to the computers without being spotted. That meant huddling right underneath them in the tight space left for airflow around the machines which tended to get quite hot if they had to run the calculations necessary to power the superlaser.

He flinched every time someone walked overhead, sure that they would look down and spot him. But nobody did. In fact, they went about their business like normal until the ground beneath them trembled.

“We’re under attack!” an officer shouted.

Murmurs of confusion spread throughout the Stormtroopers. Did they go and help fight off the invader? Did they stay at their posts like they had been ordered to? Did they try to flee the ship and save themselves if destruction was imminent?

“You mangy curs,” someone snapped and Finn recognized the bronze-plated Stormtrooper captain from the slits in the plastiron that he could see up through. “Hold your ground. We have enough troops in this Death Star to decimate all of the planets in the Outer Rim.”

The Troopers shifted uneasily but stayed where they were. Finn wanted to swear but knew he had to keep quiet. After a few minutes, a clank of boots on the ground made all of the Stormtroopers stand at attention.

“Sir,” Captain Redding said. Their voice was harder to hear so Finn assumed they were facing the door. “We are holding firm. No signs of Resistance fighters here, sir.”

“Hmm, very good,” said a nastily familiar voice. Admiral Hux. Or General Hux. Or whatever he’d been promoted to after he’d come up with this multi-Death Star idea.

Captain Redding followed the Admiral some ways into the chamber, the two of them stopping almost right above Finn’s hiding place. “General, is it true what the radio said? There has been an explosion on level six?”

“It is true,” Hux said in his snide voice. “Do not concern yourself with such matters. It was a simple malfunction, not an attack.”

“Ah,” Redding said, straightening. “Very good, sir.”

“Keep your troops in line or they will know suffering,” Hux snapped. He stomped off, accompanied by his guard and the captain set the Troopers to pacing around the Core.

Finn slid back into the air duct so he wouldn’t be quite so exposed if one of the Stormtroopers happened to look across the chamber. The distraction hadn’t worked.

He mentally calculated how long it had been since they had left Yavin 4. They had been allotted 24 hours to complete the mission and it had taken six to get to the Death Star, half to get off the ship and free, and with several breaks along the way to rest their sore and aching arms another six to climb up to the reactor. That was over half of their time, gone. And who knew how long he had been in these air ducts. Probably at least an hour if not two, considering how far Opheela had probably gone before she’d set off those explosives.

Ten hours and change seemed like a lot but they still had to get back down to the hangar and off the ship. And Finn had no clue where anybody else was. He decided to wait a bit to try and come up with a reasonable plan.
He had to move to a different duct after a bit to stretch cramped and uncomfortable muscles. He wanted to pace or run through exercises but had no room to do any of those things. They would probably help him with his racing brain.

Just when his patience was about to run thin, a voice came from the shadows below Finn, in the corridor just under his current hiding place. “Shit, wrong hallway again.”

“Kyron?” Finn asked without thinking. He’d almost figured the man for dead but huddled in the recess of the wall, looking around for the source of the voice calling his name, was Kyron. “Kyron, up here.”

Kyron looked up, eyes widening in shock when Finn popped open the grate above his head just enough to be seen. “Goddamn! You’re a sneaky son a bitch.”

Finn gave the larger man directions on how to easily enter the shafts and then waited, trying in vain to stretch out his awfully kinked neck. He remembered maybe five years ago, huddling in similar vents when him and his comrades had briefly played hide-and-seek that one time. He couldn’t remember his joints and muscles hurting so much then.

“Finn!” Kyron exclaimed in a hushed whisper when he rounded a corner on hands and knees, reaching out to place a hand on Finn’s shoulder. “I heard the explosion and thought… well, I’m glad to see you. Where’s O?”

“She went to set it off,” Finn said. “We were hoping it would draw out the guards from around the core, but no luck.”

“Fuck,” Kyron muttered, when Finn showed him the crowded room. “Someone’s going to need to kamikaze in there, probably.”

Unfortunately, Finn recognized that word all too well. Stormtroopers were taught to do just that, especially if an officer was downed. “Okay,” he said.

“Not you,” Kyron said, a bemused smile tugging at his lips for a split second before he returned to contemplatively looking out the duct. “You’re the only one of us two who can use a goddamned computer.”

“I should let you know that the gunners up there are instructed to destroy the computer terminals at the first sign of distress in the core chamber,” Finn said, pointing out the three laser cannons aimed at the terminals. “They will force the emergency protocols to select a terminal at random in the Death Star to take its place.”

“And since like you said only one has access to the shields at any time,” Kyron said, a calculating look in his eyes. “Okay. Got it. You’ll be ready to jump out and do your thing?” he asked, miming typing with his fingers.

Finn nodded. He watched Kyron shuffle off and crawled himself into position, wincing at the stiffness of his knees. He watched from his vantage point as best as he could: he really only had a good view of two of the laser cannons from the duct beneath the computer terminals. One of them jerked suddenly and Finn saw the tip of it lower just a fraction. Kyron must be up there.

He received adamant confirmation when the laser cannon burst to life, shooting out what Finn could only hope were the other two cannons before moving to point at the startled Stormtroopers below. He carved a swatch through their ranks before Captain Redding shouted at a group of them to get moving. Now the number of people left in the core chamber was down to ten.
Finn decided that was manageable, especially since Kyron maintained his covering fire for a minute or two and he scrambled out of the duct, able to shoot down another three Troopers before the laser cannon above exploded in a blinding blast of electroplasm. “Move it you fools!” Captain Redding shouted.

Finn, crouched behind the computer, carefully took aim and fired. The bronze-plated captain turned, one hand moving to their shoulder in surprise as they toppled off the platform and down into the darkness at the centre of the reactor core.

The remaining Stormtroopers fled, or at least the two that Finn could see did. When he stood he had to duck down quickly as the searing heat of blaster fire sizzled past his left ear. He glanced over his shoulder and was shocked to see Opheela standing only a few feet away, blaster lowering. “You missed one,” she said matter-of-factly.

“Kyron,” Finn said, pointing up at the laser cannon where he’d last seen the man. The weapon dangled uselessly, smoke and fire still rising from the area.

“On it,” Opheela said. “I’ll come back if I can but if not…”

“See you at the rendezvous point,” Finn said, already turning to the terminal to type as quickly as he could.

“We leave at the 24 hour mark,” Opheela warned. “If you’re not there…”

“If I’m not there, I’m dead or I can’t leave,” Finn said, smiling sadly over his shoulder. He couldn’t predict how this would go, no matter how hard he tried.

“May the Force be with you,” Opheela said, leaving Finn alone with the reactor core.

Poe

Their losses were not surprising but still the numbers were jarring. By the time the Resistance had destroyed eight out of the ten Death Stars they had lost two bombers and four recruits. Poe counted their losses, as hard as they were to take, as a slight win.

“Two left, Black Leader,” Jessika said through the comms. “Jump to Snap’s Death Star?”

“Roger that, Orange Leader,” Poe said. “Then we’ll go see about helping Joph and the Crimson Squadron over at the last ship.”

“Red Leader standing by for light speed,” Nien Numb said. “After you, Black Leader.”

“Let’s go, kids,” Poe said. Lucky for Snap, they arrived in good time. He and one recruit had been driven back to protect their bomber, which was really just there for decoration but was still an important Resistance asset.

Karé Kun and Stiletto Squadron were dispatched with Nien Numb and Red to relieve Snap and Poe took control of the remaining six squadrons with him in a charge at the Death Star. The TIE fighters were much more numerous at this station, with it being one of the two most difficult of the Death Stars to destroy. Shields had supposedly been taken out but the infiltrators had been unable to place any explosives.
“Black Leader, we are out,” came a voice through the comms as Poe prepared to take two wings into the Death Star’s core. “You are clear to make a pass. It’s one of those shot-through-the-tiny-hole points of destruction, no entry into this motherfucker from the outside.”

“Like a Skywalker port?” Poe asked. “Well, shit.”

“Go, Poe,” Jessika said. “We’ll cover you.”

Poe had to wipe the sweat from his brow but gritted his teeth together and flew on. Luke Skywalker had famously destroyed the very first Death Star by shooting a miniscule target against all odds. And now they expected him to do it?

Well he couldn’t really claim to be the absolute best pilot in the Resistance if he couldn’t make the shot, now could he?

“Up against the Death Star? Are you crazy? We’ll be blown to bits!”

“Think positively here, buddy,” Poe said to BB-8 as they approached the surface of the gigantic ship. “For example, I am positive that this shot is almost impossible to make, even with our technological advancements.”

BB-8 squealed out a string of profanities that Poe definitely hadn’t taught it and then grumbled down to continue its work as a shot from a TIE fighter brushed by, too close for comfort.

It took three flyby passes to clear out enough of the laser cannons on the surface to even get close to the port. In that time Poe watched three recruits get shot out of the sky. Green Leader’s wing got clipped and he spiraled out of the way, hopefully able to make it to safety.

On their fourth and final pass, Poe closed his eyes when he knew he could rush down the trench without any obstructions. He had only a few seconds to prepare, to aim, to fire. His hands felt sweaty, jittery, shaky and he had to steel himself with some really deep breaths.

Just one shot and then you’re almost done. Even if you die now, you’ll have saved the galaxy from a good portion of the Death Stars at least.

Fifty metres said the beeping distance-meter on his dash.

Forty.

Thirty.

An image, unbidden, came to him: Finn, on his bed with a thin sheet barely covering him from the waist down. His face had been so much more relaxed in sleep than Poe could ever remember him being when awake. If he made this shot they might be able to pick up where they’d left off…

Poe opened his eyes and focused, shooting off four or five shots before jerking the throttle up and out of the way. His X-Wing jumped, clawing her way up and out, as fast and as far as she could get before the massive ship behind them exploded, taking out the small uninhabited moon it had been circling at the same time.

The cries of joy from around him were lost on Poe as he had to shoot down another handful of TIE fighters, men and women who clearly hadn’t got orders to stop shooting at Resistance fighters before their base had exploded. The brunt of them were starting to peel away at least, probably to regroup and reform on some distant starship.
“Hey,” he said into the comms as the starfighters gathered around the bomber, preparing to jump to their last target. “Is Finn there with you guys? The infiltration squad?”

“It’s me, sorry,” Rose said quietly into the comms. “My group, and just me and Mary made it off. Finn’s on the other ship.”

Poe felt his helmet hit the headrest behind him. Finn was still out there and who knew if he was still alive? There was no way Poe was going to survive this if there wasn’t even a chance his… friend? More? If Finn wasn’t going to make it, Poe didn’t know what he would do. “Copy that,” he said, hoping his voice wouldn’t break audibly.

Snap cleared his throat on the comms. “Private channel, Poe. You going to be alright?”

“Won’t know if he’s dead until we see the explosion, I guess,” Poe said.

“Maybe he’ll be on the transport out,” Snap offered.

“Maybe,” Poe muttered, doubtful. Finn? Not be at the direct centre of the action? Yeah right. “Let’s go, we don’t have time to reminisce.”


The starfighters, exhausted but blood boiling with the fight, all acquiesced and off they jumped.

To the last Death Star.

To Finn.

**Finn**

Finn was having a hell of a time. He’d managed to sneak past the first layer of usernames and passwords but the shielding system had proved to be beneath so many layers of security that it wasn’t even funny.

It didn’t help that approximately every half hour, a small group of Stormtroopers were sent to investigate the disturbance in the reactor core. The explosions that Opheela had set off must have caused a greater problem than General Hux had cared to admit. Hopefully she’d set them close enough to the outer rim of the Death Star that after Finn had lowered the outer shields even more problems arose.

Oddly enough, that shield had been fairly simple to disable. The one he could still see buzzing around the reactor core was extremely difficult to find. He had also unfortunately lost track of time and figured he must be very close to the deadline if not past it already.

Well. He’d just have to hope for the best.

“Aha,” he said to himself, eyes locked on the screen after his latest round of takedowns. His fingers were aching, his eyes were burning and he felt pretty hungry. In what he would later decide was an ill-advised move, he took a second to unwrap a ration bar tucked into his coat pocket. He could see the ten or so keystrokes he would need to disable the final shields and was eager to put them in.

Unfortunately, the ration bar proved to be nearly fatal for Finn. One minute it was in his hand and
the next it had exploded into a puff of dust alarmingly close to his mouth. He ducked immediately, looking around wildly for the shooter.

“You blasted idiots,” the snide voice of General Hux said from across the chamber. It echoed wildly, bouncing off the many striated columns that carried power from the reactor core to the rest of the ship. “Did you even hit him?”

“Sir. I think so,” one of the Stormtroopers said.

Finn’s heart was beating out of control in his chest. He reached up to the keyboard, not willing to risk his head being exposed because he’d spotted the group of them across the chamber.

That had been a warning shot. Or maybe the Stormtrooper had genuinely missed him.

At any rate, he was able to type in three digits before a shot sizzled just above his hand.

“You’ve missed again! Give me that, you daft idiot,” General Hux snapped. The sound of a scuffle bought Finn another four keystrokes before shots were popping up all around him.

He grabbed his own blaster and pivoted on his heel. The Stormtrooper next to Hux was probably staring at him: Finn gave them a shot right between their feet. They may have been kind enough to miss him and any good Trooper would know that he was giving them a chance. Not that it was officially part of their curriculum, but Finn himself had discussed with his Troopers what they would do if they encountered someone they really genuinely didn’t want to shoot.

General Hux fired another five times, using only one hand and clearly not aiming since they all flew wide of Finn. Finn saw the Stormtrooper turn tail and run and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Don’t come any closer,” Finn warned, noting that the pasty red-headed asshole was a hundred paces away. Not a difficult shot with a sniper rifle but with the puny blaster he had, a direct hit could prove to be challenging.

General Hux growled and fired again. Before he could take a second shot, Finn squinted one eye half shut, steadied his right wrist and took a single shot. The man yelped as his blaster flew from his grip to tumble down the endless pit of the core chamber.

Finn turned to the computer and typed: Y, enter, Y, enter, Y–

“Stop!” Hux shouted, and Finn felt a hot blast kiss the left side of his neck just as he hit the last enter key.

Finn turned, about to raise his blaster when his muscles seized up. What? He struggled but was unable to move even his pinky finger. He could feel his lungs questing, looking for his diaphragm to kick back in, to help expel the carbon dioxide building in his chest.

His scar flared to life, a bolt of molten magma spiking its way through bone and flesh as his vision faded at the edges. He could see in the distance, the shields of the reactor core flickering briefly in their rhythm. They’d turn off fully in a minute or so and then he would have accomplished his goal.

“–you can’t just walk in, I have this situation under control–”

“Oh? Is that why our exterior shields have been disabled? The engineers can’t figure out how they could possibly have turned off without any input.”

“Well yes, but see, we’ve stopped him before he could disable the core’s shield. So we will be
“So what, they can plant enough explosives to destroy the rest of the ship but thank God we’ve still got the fucking core? Are you serious, Hux?”

“I don’t appreciate your tone, Ren.”

“It’s Supreme Leader,” Kylo Ren said, voice laced with annoyance. His hold on Finn wavered and in that instant, the shields around the core flickered out of existence.

“No!” Kylo Ren shouted, hand thrusting out to shove towards Finn. Finn felt his feet leave the floor, felt the rush of air around him. He was flying, weightless, for one blissful moment.

The sickening crack of his own skull connecting with the hard plastiron wall sent him into a dark, starry prison. He felt himself fall to the floor as though he was very far away from his body. He couldn’t catch himself before his face connected with the ground either and another crunch told him that his nose was probably broken.

That brought him back to his body, back to dizzy nausea pulling his stomach in circles and a spinning about the eyes. He probably had a good concussion to go with the broken nose.

“You idiot,” Hux seethed and from what Finn could see, turning his face to the side, Kylo Ren had taken his lightsaber and chopped the computer in half. “You blasted fucking fool hrrgkl–”

“You cannot speak to me like that,” Kylo Ren said calmly. He always ran on a bit of a high whenever he threw one of his famous tantrums. “I am your superior officer.”

Hux clawed at his throat and choked out: “Can’t. Enable. Shields.”

“What?” Kylo Ren asked. The redhead dropped to his feet, gasping. “Of course we can.”

“Only – one – computer–” Hux wheezed, his hand still on his throat. “Is the – master – and can….”

Kylo Ren said nothing for a moment. Finn saw his lightsaber waver in the air and felt the seething anger inside the other man rising. “Why didn’t you say something?”

“I was trying to!” Hux shouted. “That bastard kept typing and then you showed up and wouldn’t listen going on about oh I’m the Supreme Leader well we’re about to be blown to bits because the ship has chosen a random computer to be its new master device, Supreme Leader! How do you think that will feel, eh?”

Kylo Ren growled and turned on his heel, stalking with all the dignity he could probably muster to Finn, who he lifted again with the Force, one hand still holding his mightily buzzing lightsaber. Every refresh of the killing device’s crystals sent a shock through Finn’s back. He could do nothing to avoid the Sith’s grasp which picked him up in the air and held him by what felt like his throat.

Finn reached his hands up instinctively but his fingers clawed into empty air where his mind told him a large, malformed hand was. He could feel his nose swelling, trying to block out what little vision he could maintain with the choking.

“You,” Kylo spat, his eyes blazing with an angry red fire. “You keep showing up unbidden. How dare you.”

“Let him go.”
The voice of an angel bounced off the reflective plastilon around them. The grip on his neck stopped tightening but did not loosen.

Rey leaped onto the platform above their head and activated her lightsaber in a buzzing fury. Her face was calm and composed, eyes focused on Kylo who despite being clearly hindered by Rey, declined to drop Finn. “Rey,” he snarled. “Why do you insist on only shadowing me? I can feel your desires: the wish to join me, to taste the power I hold. Why do you still stand apart?”

“I stand with a long line of Jedi. I stand to face the darkness head on. If you continue to allow yourself to be engulfed by the Dark Side of the Force then I will always stand against you, Ben. Now let him go,” Rey said, and her last three words held a terrible power. Her grip on her lightsaber did not falter but Finn felt the grip around his throat finally weaken.

Sweet, blessed air trickled into his lungs and he gasped for it, aching to bring colour back to his vision. He felt the ground rushing to meet him again and saw Kylo lunging for Rey. He had to kneel and cough for a bit though, eyes watering and throat burning.

The fiery crackle of blue-on-red drove pains through his chest, a stone-sharpened dagger twisting and stabbing. It overrode the dull ache of his tender nose and bruised knees. He came back to himself enough to remember the explosive in his pocket and pulled it out.

He looked across the core chamber, trying to track the action. Kylo Ren was flipping through the air, flying towards Rey who was rolling out of the way.

“Rey!” Finn shouted, catching her eye for a split second before he threw the soft explosive. It arced through the air, initially headed in Rey’s direction before she flicked her wrist and leaped towards Finn.

The heat from the blast was partly blocked by Rey’s solid form barrelling into Finn. The force, however, of both the explosion and of Rey’s collision with him sent the two of them sliding over the edge of the platform.

Finn scrabbled for a handhold, but was unable to grab hold of the railing or edge. He felt himself falling backwards and though a few minutes ago he had accepted his demise at the hands of Kylo Ren now mind mind was screaming at him to grab hold of life and live, damn you.

A strong hand closed around his elbow, slipping on slick skin but slowing his descent some. The jolt of the impact pulled at his shoulder joint which he hoped wasn’t dislocated. He reached up his other hand as his arm slipped through Rey’s grip to wrist then fingertips. He managed to get a grip on her with his other hand and held on for dear life.

“You alright?” Rey asked.

“I’b dot gread,” Finn admitted, spitting away blood. He tried to pull himself up but couldn’t quite manage it as his grip was slipping.

Rey grunted, eyes closing in concentration as she slowly but surely pulled them up with both the arm holding Finn and that on the railing, until they were close enough that Finn could grab hold of the railing on his own. After struggling against the weight of his own body, Finn managed to get a leg up and then it was a manageable affair, getting himself to the relative safety of the solid platform.

The two of them lay there, panting, Finn at least grateful that an angry Kylo Ren didn’t come jumping out at them. “How did you pull me up here? With the Force?” he asked, excited to hear
about Rey’s new Jedi skills.

Rey punched Finn on the shoulder. “I lifted you with my incredible strength, thank you very much,” she scoffed, hopping to her feet and offering him a hand.

“Oh,” said Finn who had known that Rey was very strong but had not really known how strong. “Well done.”

“Thank you,” Rey said primly, dusting off her probably filthy jumpsuit.

“Lucky for me you came along just then,” Finn said.

“I suppose,” Rey said, with a little toss of her head that showed that she definitely agreed with him. “When we didn’t hear you on the ship that got out of here I knew something had to be really wrong. And I’d lost track of Kylo Ren to be perfectly honest with you.”

So that was it then. Opheela and Kyron had gotten free. And he had given the Resistance the chance to take out a Death Star. “That’s good,” he said. Abruptly, he realized that while he was a loss the Resistance could stand to suffer but Rey certainly wasn’t.

“Hang on,” Finn said. “You have to get off this ship, Rey!”

“Me? What about you?” Rey asked. “Honestly, Finn, it’s like you can’t plan worth shit.”


“Unfortunately for us, I’m sure that those two slimy bastards took the nearest escape pod off this ship. And we’ve not the time to go after then, I’m afraid.”

“Time? The explosives aren’t rigged on a timer,” Finn said. He felt lost, dazed, confused and the nigglung sensation on the front of his face was trying to remind him that his nose was, in fact, still broken.

Rey must have caught him looking at it because she gave his face a cursory once-over, reached out a hand and then some invisible force snapped his nose back in place. “Fuck,” Finn spat, literally, because some blood from his nose had run into his mouth again. “Ow!”

“Now that time, I used the Force. See the difference?” Rey asked conversationally. “Anyway, as a matter of fact, you and I are on a schedule.”

“A what?” Finn asked, voice sounding stuffy up coming through his blood-clogged nose. At least it would hopefully be straight now. If only he had some water to clear his face off with.

“Our ride is coming,” Rey said.

“Ride?” Finn asked, glancing around. What he saw was not a ship coming to their rescue but Kylo Ren, crawling back onto a platform just like he and Rey had a few moments ago. “Rey!” he shouted, the only warning he could give her before both Jedi and Sith had their hands pointed at each other. Finn was slapped aside by the meeting of the invisible forces, pushed up against the wall.

Kylo Ren snarled something that Finn couldn’t hear, there was something blocking out the noise in his ears. Rey shouted back, and maybe it was just Finn who couldn’t hear? He realized he could move, if only barely but it was enough to lift his blaster, aim and fire. Something twisted the shot in the air but it clipped the railing beside Kylo Ren anyway. Not bad.
The man glared at Finn with the gaze of a monster whose soul was completely lost. With one hand still extended towards Rey he gestured with his other towards Finn. “Oh come on,” Finn choked out when he felt the pressure around his throat again. It wasn’t as bad this time, but then that meant that Kylo Ren had to be struggling, didn’t he?

“Stop it, Ben!” Rey shouted. “You’ll lose yourself!”

A bit too late for that, Finn thought. He saw stars again, what a fucking joke this was. The crackling and general noise was rising, becoming almost deafening until a trio of X-Wings burst into the reactor core from somewhere just above Kylo Ren’s head. The Sith was caught off balance; even moreso when he had to activate his lightsaber to block blasts from all three starfighters.

“You haven’t seen the last of me!” Kylo screamed, eyes rimmed with red rage, veins standing out around his face. He made a pulling motion and the platform Rey and Finn were on came off the wall, tipping precariously towards the reactor core.

Finn didn’t see what happened to Kylo after that: he was too busy holding Rey as she almost tipped over the edge.

One of the X-Wings, the only black one with orange details, flew over to where they stood, approaching with excruciating slowness until the wingtip connected with the tipping platform. A jolt passed through the plastiron, causing Rey to stumble against Finn’s grip on her. The starfighter slowly pushed the platform until it was stable enough that they weren’t shaking where they stood.

The cockpit popped open and Poe came into view, gesturing wildly with the hand not on the throttle. Rey tugged out of Finn’s loosened grip and leaped on the ship without a second’s thought, finding her footing without even a stumble. She seemed to make a split-second decision and jumped out into empty space just as the second ship flew by, cockpit popping open to reveal Jessika Pava in the pilot’s chair.

Finn held onto the railing and eyed the cockpit. “This isn’t really a two-seater,” he shouted over the engine noises. “Are you sure I’ll fit?”

“Oh I’m fuckin’ positive you’re gonna,” Poe shouted. He’d moved up in the seat so the throttle was almost poking his chest. “Hurry up! This motherfucker’s going up in flames in a matter of seconds, not hours, buddy!”

Finn sighed but carefully made his way into the cockpit. He definitely only barely fit and that was with his legs squashed awkwardly next to Poe’s. “People will talk,” he muttered as he wrapped his arms around Poe’s midsection. He felt like a tube of toothpaste that had been squeezed out and was trying to be fit back in through the teeny tiny mouth of an opening.

“Fuck ‘em,” Poe said. “They can talk all they want.” He closed the cockpit and they took off, the acceleration pushing Finn back in the seat with a giddy thrill. It was almost like when they’d first escaped the First Order, only that had been a much roomier experience.

But what this ride lacked in seating space it made up with how exciting it was. Even squashed and with barely room to breathe in the ship, Poe’s ability to make the ship move just where he wanted it to was incredible. His hand on the throttle twitched and smoothly moved, giving the ship the direction she needed to make jaw-dropping feats of flymanship. Finn thought for sure they were going to hit an innumerable amount of TIE fighters and plastiron columns, each time gasping when Poe made it around the tricksome corners and twists.
“Hang on buddy, here comes the big boom,” Poe said, then: “Copy that, Stiletto. You are clear to detonate.”

Finn heard a chorus of tinny sounds from Poe’s helmet. He turned his head to the side with some difficulty but managed to get his ear on the helmet. He adjusted his grip around Poe’s chest to compensate for his slightly twisted seat in the ship.

“That’s a go from us as well, Stiletto,” Jessika’s unmistakable voice said.

“Detonation in three,” said a voice Finn only recognized from the hangar bay.

“Eyes on Orange. Eyes on Black. Eyes on Stiletto. You are all clear to—”

Finn felt the explosion behind them, delivering a concussive wave of pressure against the back of the X-Wing and let his head fall back against the headrest. Poe let out a whoop of joy, muscles tensed under Finn’s palms.

“Copy that, Rapier,” Poe said. “Black Two you’ve got a bogey on your six. Black Three, could you get that… thanks. You alright back there, buddy?”

Finn opened his mouth to speak but heard the trills and warbles of BB-8 chime in, probably delivering a much-needed reprimand to Poe for having put himself in such needless danger.

“Not you, I know you’re fine,” Poe said, through BB-8’s angry-sounding whistles. “Alright, alright! I get it! Charge the warp drive then, if you’re so mad about it! Finn, hey.”

Poe let one of his hands drop from the throttle to pat at Finn’s leg. “Finn, you still with me, buddy?”

“I’m here,” Finn said.

“You doing alright?”

Finn was honestly having a hard time processing the fact that he was, in fact, still alive. He hadn’t gone up in flames with the Death Star. And he was with Poe, somehow stuffed into a cockpit that was meant for only one person at a time. “I’m …” he started, but Poe cut him off.

“What? Shit, I see them,” Poe said, and then the X-Wing was banking at an incredible speed, chasing off a group of TIE fighters. “They’re relentless… Red Two, can you cover us? Good. Yeah, I got them.”

Finn must have drifted off because he felt sluggish and heavy, jerking out of whatever stupor he’d gone into when Poe shook his leg again. “I’m awake,” he said, with no conviction.

Poe chuckled. “Sorry about that. Jumping to lightspeed here. It’ll be a bit of a push… there we go. What were you saying? I interrupted you before.”

Finn shook his head even though Poe couldn’t see him. “Nothing. I’m fine.”

“Are you sure? It looks like someone took a bat to your face,” Poe said. He hadn’t lifted the hand from Finn’s leg and it was so warm, he was so warm and solid and real and here.

“You weren’t supposed to come and get me,” Finn muttered. “Opheela was supposed to blow the reactor when they got free. Did you come after Rey?”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Poe asked, a thread of anger lacing through his words.
Finn frowned, unsure of what he’d done to deserve that. It felt like a hand was twisting his gut into swirls. “Huh? I asked if you came after Rey… I mean I guess I don’t need to ask that, it’s obvious that you—”

“Obvious?” Poe asked, and Finn could feel in the hard lines of his muscles all tensing that he was really angry now. “Fuck, Finn. I told the General she could blow the Death Star whenever she damn well pleased but I was going in if you were stuck in there and I wasn’t coming out without you.”

“But Rey—”

“Rey? She offered to go in first to make sure you were alright! She fucking force-communicated with the General to tell her that you weren’t. They didn’t send me in, we all fucking volunteered.”

That just didn’t make any sense. “But you had the perfect opportunity… you would have destroyed the Death Star and General Hux and Kylo Ren…”

“But we would have lost you,” Poe snapped. He slumped back after a beat, turning his head as much as he could so Finn could see his eyes through the visor. When he spoke again, his voice was quiet. It delivered as much of a blow to Finn’s heart as Rey’s words had earlier to Kylo Ren. “Hell… I would have lost you. I’m not ready to give you up just yet, you know.”

“Oh,” Finn said. Poe probably couldn’t tell that he was blushing because of the dried and disgusting, blood on his face. But Finn could feel the blush fizzling across his skin, practically burning away the crusted blood. Also because Poe probably couldn’t really see him based on how tightly they were crammed into this sardine can of a cockpit.

“Thank you, Poe,” Poe said, with a snort. He turned back to face forwards and Finn was just left with a centimetre of space between his nose and Poe’s helmet. “I’d go into a Death Star to rescue you too, Poe. Did they not teach you manners back in the First Order?”

BB-8 whistled something and Poe snorted again. “Everyone’s a critic,” he mumbled.

“I am grateful,” Finn said. “I just didn’t think… I don’t know.”

“What, you didn’t think you were worth it? Let me tell you: you sure as shit are, buddy. And not just to me. Didn’t you notice that Jess and Bas were there right with me? Hell, I— fuck, man.” Poe breathed out a long breath, hands clenching and unclenching around the throttle. “I fucking love you, Finn. Okay? You’re worth it. Trust me.”

“Okay,” Finn mumbled. He looked out at the speeding stars passing them by and then frowned at the back of Poe’s head. “Wait, what’s that?”

Poe didn’t say anything and Finn thought maybe he’d said something wrong again. “Poe?” he asked. “I don’t know that word you said.”

“Which one?” Poe asked, voice husky, almost sounding like when Finn felt tears stoppering his throat.

“Love,” Finn said.

Poe fell silent again, a nervous energy rising in the cockpit. BB-8 chirped something behind them and Poe waved a hand in the air. “I get it, I’ll tell him. It’s complicated, Finn.”

Finn was fairly confident that they had at least a few minutes if not hours of flying to get through
to get back to Yavin 4 if that was where they were headed. “You’re a pretty good teacher,” he offered. “I bet you could figure out how to explain it to me.”

Poe laughed at that, a huff of air through his nose that warmed Finn to his core. “You can’t bet if you’ve got nothing to gamble with.”

“I’m sure I can come up with... adequate payment,” Finn said, adjusting his seat, sure that Poe could feel his burgeoning erection against his back.

“Oh?” Poe asked, the words almost coming out as a croak. He cleared his throat and Finn could feel the nervous energy rising to a crescendo, maybe shifting to excitement. “And what would you pay me with?”

“What did you call it?” Finn asked, pretending to not remember. He let his hands drift down Poe’s chest slowly, feeling the older man stiffen against him, hearing the soft hitches in Poe’s breath. “I think you it was called… a blowjob.”

Poe swallowed so hard that Finn could hear it. Poe swallowed again, one hand clenched around Finn’s knee, the other loosely holding the throttle still.

Finn noted with great delight that Poe’s neck was flushed from the stubble at his chin down to the orange collar of his flight suit. “Would that be to your satisfaction?” he asked, voice quiet.

He heard the pilot breathe out a long, stuttering breath when Finn’s hands found his cock, not difficult now that it was clearly fully hard.

“Uh,” Poe made out. Finn found the velcro-like closures of the orange jumpsuit and peeled them open before slipping his hand inside. He had to shift a bit to the side as Poe’s head pressed back, moving himself enough to the left that he could still reach Poe’s dick, which as previously promised was just starting to leak precome out the tip.

“I thought I should say thanks,” Finn said, thumb brushing over the head of Poe’s cock. He circled it with his fingers and spread the warm liquid down the sides. “For rescuing me.”

“Yeah,” Poe breathed, voice breaking into a moan just at the end. “You’re— ahhh—— you’re welcome.”

Finn hummed, wishing Poe could be free of the helmet so he could kiss him. His own cock was rock hard between them. Every shift and slight movement he made brushed the material of his underwear in excruciatingly little contact. He wrapped his free hand around Poe as best as he could and pulled the pilot closer so that he at least got some slight pressure from the other man’s back up against him.

“Shit,” Poe groaned again. “You’re so fucking ahh.” The muscles in Poe’s thighs tensed as he pushed his hips upwards into the circle of Finn’s fist. The motion gave Finn a second to adjust his own legs before Poe came back down. Finn had to hold him in place as he stroked faster, the precome wasn’t enough anymore so he removed his hand, much to Poe’s whining chagrin.

He had to slick it up somehow… Finn thought for a moment and then licked his hand, getting it as wet as he could before moving it back to Poe’s still-glistening cock. “That’s better,” Finn noted.

Poe half-grunted, half-wheezed. The motions of his hips became jerky and erratic and his hand on Finn’s knee gripped so hard Finn thought he might leave a bruise. “Fuck, Finn. I’m gonna come, I’m gonna—”
Finn, who had forgotten all about the mess that penises tended to make upon their eruption, thought quickly and angled Poe’s cock inside his jumpsuit, wincing a bit when the pilot made a strangled noise. “Sorry,” he said, hoping that Poe’s slumped form was at least indicative of pleasure and not protest.

BB-8 chirped, almost sarcastically. “What?” Poe asked, voice almost slurred. Then, as their ship suddenly left lightspeed: “Oh, fuck.”

They were approaching a freighter, which hovered in the near distance along with the other surviving X-Wings.

“We’re there already?” Finn asked. “Are we not going to the planet?”

“What are you swearing over the comm lines for, Captain Dameron?” came a voice within Poe’s helmet.

“Nothing, General,” Poe said, hastily revelcroing his flight suit and grabbing the throttle with both hands. “Shit. Nothing. Sorry.”

“Is that Finn I heard?”

“Yes, General,” Finn said. He didn’t have to angle his voice into the microphone obviously for her to hear him, which was good.

“Congratulations on a job well done, Finn. To answer your question, we will be heading back to Yavin 4. A six hour trip is much more comfortable on a larger ship though, don’t you think?”

“Yes,” Finn said, without hesitation.

“Hey,” Poe protested. “I thought you were getting pretty comfortable back there.”

“Gross, Dameron,” Jessika’s voice came through the comms.

“Keep it in your pants, Black Leader,” Bas said.

A bit too late for that, Finn thought. He snorted and wiped his hand absent-mindedly on the front of Poe’s flight suit, ignoring the other man’s vague protest.

Poe angled Black One towards the freighter, keeping track of the other fighters in the distance. “We’re going home, buddy.”

Home. Now didn’t that word just sound like heaven. Finn clung to Poe in the cramped space, breathing in the smell of the woodsly soap from Yavin 4, from a planet they were going to return to that would welcome them with open arms.

I’m going home.
Poe woke up groggy, with his mouth dry and an arm draped around him. When he shifted on the bed, trying to stretch the kinks in his back and his legs, the body behind him mumbled a complaint and tightened its grip.

He glanced over his shoulder just enough to see Finn, his face half-buried in a soft pillow. A liquid warmth spread through Poe, filling him up from the inside out.

Their reception from the Death Star mission had been two-parted. First on the freighter and then later on the planet.

When they had emerged from their X-Wings, dirty but triumphant. Poe was pretty sure he’d been a bright shade of red due partly to the close proximity he and Finn had just been in and partly to the come drying stickily between Poe and his flight suit. Oh, and on his flight suit, where Finn had wiped his hands. For such a stickler about being neat and tidy with his clothes, Finn didn’t seem to have the same qualms about Poe’s clothes.

“Dameron,” Bas said, loudly clapping Poe on the shoulder with one hand, reaching for the descending Finn with the other. “Boy oh boy, what a ride that was.”

“Are you blushing under your helmet there, Poe?” Jessika asked, as loudly as she possibly could. “I think he is!”

“Alright, you heathens,” Poe snapped, although he couldn’t put much heat behind it. “Let’s get this debriefing the fuck over with. I’m starving.”

“Language, language,” Leia said, from the mouth of the hangar bay. For such a small person her voice could travel awfully far. “Take a seat, boys and girls. I’ll ask our flight leaders to speak for their wings after we hear from the infiltration squads. And then you may all go take a shower or go to the medbay or eat. I hear that we are a free people tonight.”

With much cajoling and good-natured shoving and hugging, the fighters each told their tales. Poe noticed that Finn and Rey left out the part about Kylo Ren, probably something they could tell the General in private later. She dismissed them once they had each heard the breadth of the destruction and as anticlimactically as it could, the mission to destroy ten Death Stars ended.

On their way to the showers, all walking together as a group, Jessika tugged at Poe’s arm. Rey had stayed behind to talk to the General but had shooed Finn off with the pilots. “Party. Common room. After supper.”
Poe nodded. The adrenaline of the day was wearing off and he felt almost tired but knew his mind was racing too quickly to allow for sleep. Finn, who had elected to come with Poe and the pilots to the showers, leaned over. His dark eyes quested for some information. “Party,” Finn said, raising his eyebrows.

“Yeah,” Poe said. “You’re invited too.”

“Of course,” Finn said, nodding firmly. “Of course I would be invited to this party.”

“Uh huh,” Poe said. They reached the showers and he was relieved to see a kit and set of clothes in the locker numbered with his flightsign. “You sure are, buddy.”

“The thing is,” Finn said, leaning on the locker next to Poe’s. “The thing about party is, see. I don’t know what it is, is the thing.”

Poe shook his head, unable to hide a grin. “Alright, then I’ll go too. It’s a gathering of people to celebrate something. Hey, you’ve gotta grab some shit, pal. Unless you’re going to walk around in the nude all evening.”

Finn blinked at Poe. “What do you mean? I’ve never been on this freighter. My stuff won’t be here.”

“The Resistance are a kindly lot,” Poe said. “Pick a number. You’ll probably be surprised at what you find.”

He unbuckled the flotation vest, throwing it in a laundry hamper by the door that was filling up with vests. He spotted another one for his suit and winced as he deposited it, quickly wrapping a towel around his waist to hide the flakes of white coming off his stomach. He was glad the rest of the fighters were preoccupied with their own derobement.

Fully undressed (underwear off under the towel), Poe turned to see Finn staring at a locker. He approached and almost laughed when he saw the number engraved in the locker. “See?” Poe said. “I told you they’d guess where you stash your shit.”

“They brought all of my things,” Finn said softly. His mouth twisted and his eyebrows furrowed down. “Poe, do you think... would they let me change my number?”

“Finn,” Poe said, and traced the digits with a finger– 2187. “You can do whatever you want, Finn. Anything.”

Finn fell silent and Poe put a hand on his shoulder. “I’m going to shower. See you back out here.”

The water wasn’t quite as warm as on Yavin 4 but it was more than good enough. Poe scrubbed himself all over, feeling the grime of the day wash off like a weight off his shoulders. He wondered what would happen if he invited Finn to join him. Goosebumps ran up his spine. Fuck, he was almost hard again! Was this what being a teenager had been like? He wasn’t sure that he could come again but he certainly wanted to.

After the shower, the rest of the evening passed in almost a blur. He almost cut himself shaving, almost burned his tongue on the hot soup, almost reached for Finn’s hand in the hallway. He definitely couldn’t keep his eyes off the other man, not after what they had been through. He almost felt giddy with it.

Poe was talked into accompanying Finn, Rey and Jessika to the common room to play a card game but ended up falling asleep. He woke with his head on Finn’s shoulder, neck feeling all sorts of
pinched and sore and old.

The room’s lights had been dimmed and people were trickling in from various places in the freighter. “You’re awake,” Finn said with some surprise.

Poe stretched his neck and grimaced. “How long was I out?”

“You’re awake,” Finn said. “I didn’t want to wake you up.

Jessika trotted over with Rey, bright red drinks in either hand. “Drink up, boys! Wake up, old man.”

“Disrespecting your elders,” Poe said disapprovingly. “It’s beneath you, Pava.”

Jessika shrugged and took a sip of her drink.

“What’s this?” Finn asked with interest and some suspicion, peering into the glass. “It smells like it has gone bad.”

“It’s alcohol,” Jessika said. “And it probably tastes like that too. But it’s also sweet! You might like it!”

“Won’t know until you try,” Poe pointed out, picking up the glass Jess had brought for him. One sip had him contemplating the glass: they’d broken out the strong and really good stuff.

Finn was watching him with an eagle’s eye, clearly gauging his reaction to the alcohol and went to take a sip. His face screwed up in the usual first response, then screwed up even tighter. “What…” he said, and took another sip. He made the same face but kept drinking. Once he had drunk almost half the cup he nodded, pushing lips forward in a contemplative look. “It’s not bad.”

Two drinks later and Finn really seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the new experience. Jessika had recruited Bastian, who had brought a bright yellow beverage and Kyron, who had suggested a dark brown whiskey-like drink.

“There are so many flavours in these alcohols,” Finn noted to Poe after his third drink. Poe himself had only had the one and was slowly nursing a purple bubbly drink that had clearly been brought along from Yavin 4. “What’s that one you have?”

He offered it to Finn who took a sip. His eyes lit up and he drank the whole thing. “Wow!” he exclaimed. “That’s sweet! Like honey cakes but more fruity…dancing in my mouth!”

“It’s a sort of bubbly Koyo wine,” Poe said with a laugh. “It’s from Yavin 4…probably from my dad’s farm, actually. He makes it by hand.”

Finn leaned over, eyes earnest and pupils wider than usual, likely from the dangerous whiskey Kyron had given to him. “I like your dad’s wine,” he said, very seriously.

Poe couldn’t help but smile. Being with Finn with both of them out of danger for the moment was more intoxicating than the wine or any of the drinks they could conceivably make on the freighter. He thought about saying something but Nien Numb had got the Resistance’s ancient but trusty music player out and cranked up to full volume.

Finn seemed transfixed by the noises, eyes darting from the speaker to the people cheering and moving around on the makeshift dance floor. “What are they doing?” he asked, having to shout the repeated question directly into Poe’s ear to be heard.

Finn seemed unsure so Poe got up, hoping that if all he needed an incentive, his own willingness to try despite Finn’s inexperience would be the push he needed. “C’mon. I’ll show you how,” he said.

Finn hesitated again, the two sides of himself clearly at war: the Stormtrooper punished for not doing things right the first time and the man who was slowly learning to accept himself as a person, one who had the freedom to live, laugh, love, and make mistakes. Poe waited, patient, ready to sit down if turned away but finally Finn made a decision and placed his hand in Poe’s. “Okay,” he said, and let Poe pull him to his feet.

The beat was lively, with happy violins fiddling out a jig. Poe tugged Finn into the fringes of the dance floor, with the other pilots, Rose and Rey. The faces of the crowd were merry, alive with the light of having done good. Finn was, of course, a natural: he’d been trained to move to much more somber beats but soon figured out how to shuffle his feet and wiggle his hips in concert much to the girls’ collective delight.

One upbeat song melted into another and then a third and Poe had to finally excuse himself to sit by the side of the room and drink some water. One nap wasn’t enough to wipe out almost twelve straight hours of flight and adrenaline and sheer unbridled panic. He sipped at the cool liquid, eyes finding Finn among the crowd.

The darker man’s face was all smile, carefree among the uplifting tunes and the camaraderie of his friends. He was snapping, body in tune with the fluid movements of the song, eyes closed in a pure enjoyment of dancing just for the sake of dancing.

The fighters danced through the night, giving up a ragged cheer when it was announced that they were landing on Yavin 4 in only a few minutes. As a group, they all crowded into the cargo bay, arms flung about one another.

Finn leaned over to whisper into Poe’s ear: “I like dancing,” he said so earnestly that Poe smiled.

“I can tell,” he said back, craning his neck to the side to find Finn’s wide eyes looking right at him.

“It’s fun,” Finn said, smiling.

The ship landed with a soft thunk, and when the doors open there were all the remaining members of the Resistance as well as several planetside citizens, including Poe’s dad. Poe barely recalled leaving the ship as his dad approached them, pulling Poe into a tight hug. He hadn’t done that since Poe was young, probably just after his mother’s death.

“Dad,” Poe said.

“Poe, I’m so glad,” his dad said, and then his dad was letting go of him to put a hand out to Finn. “Finn, good to see you again.”

“Oh,” Finn said, taking Kes’ hand. The man held it, expression almost stern and then his face broke into a smile and he pulled Finn into a hug as well.

“You kept my reckless boy safe,” Kes said.

“Dad,” Poe said, rolling his eyes.

“Actually, sir,” Finn said, “It was the other way around.”
“Regardless,” Kes said, as Poe’s ears burned. “It’s good to see you two in one piece! Are you boys too tired or are you coming to the celebration later?”

“Another celebration?” Finn asked, almost dazed. “We were just doing our jobs.”

“Finn,” Rey said, popping up out of nowhere, “You have to see the size of the speakers in this place! More music! Can you believe it?”

Finn shook his head and gave Poe an apologetic glance as Rey dragged him off. “Bye, Mister Dameron,” he called over his shoulder.

Kes watched the two of them go and turned gravely to Poe. “Son,” he said. “Do you still have that ring your mother gave you?”

“Dad,” Poe said, looking up at the sky.

“I know it’s not my place and you’re a grown man,” Kes said. He put a hand on Poe’s shoulder and Poe wondered if he’d ever stop feeling like a little kid around his dad. “But son, there are some things in life… some people… well, you need to hold on tight or they might fly away.”

“Dad,” Poe groaned, rubbing his temple.

“Alright, alright,” Kes said. “We’d better go before you fall asleep on your feet. You look tired.”

“Dad!”

Finn

The music was loud, pounding, infectious. Finn felt like it was filling his head from his ears to his toes. The girls and Poe had shown him how you could move your body just to be moving it, not with any purpose like marching or saluting or shooting. It was so enjoyable to do so that Finn found himself almost waking up for a second time, the rigors of the days before forgotten.

It felt like they danced for hours, with a few breaks for water and other drinks and going to the bathroom. Poe even joined them although he did look tired after a few songs and went to sit down next to his father. But he got up after a bit of a rest and joined the group of them again.

Unexpectedly to Finn, as a few of the crowd trickled away, the mood of the song shifted. The beats were no longer like a fast stomp, more like a gentle hand on a shoulder or the thrum of nerves under skin.

Finn looked around to get cues on what this song meant for their dancing and saw the crowd separating into people going off to the sides, with those remaining clumped into twos, threes and fours instead of the previous six to tens.

He saw Jessika shove Poe hard after what looked like a brief and electrified discussion, and the pilot came stumbling towards Finn, who caught him before he could fall to the ground. “What’s this song?” Finn asked, noting Poe’s bright blush spreading from his ears to his cheeks.

“It’s, I don’t know the name of it,” Poe said. “But it’s for slow dancing to.”

“Slow dancing?” Finn asked. He looked around again and saw that the smaller groups of people
were leaning on each other very closely. When he looked back he saw that he was still holding Poe’s hand and arm from when he’d caught him only moments before. “Oh,” he said softly.

“It’s for people who aren’t uncomfortable being so close,” Poe said softly. He moved a bit closer and Finn felt his entire body catch on fire. Poe’s free hand cautiously moved to Finn’s waist, the one caught in Finn’s softening its grip and pulling Finn in close. “People… in love.”

“Oh,” Finn said again. He thought for a second and then moved the hand of his from Poe’s arm around to the pilot’s back. He thought he heard Poe take in a sharp breath and then the pilot was stepping, guiding Finn on where to move his feet with the hand on his waist and a gentle nudging from his chest and legs.

This was very different from before: where Finn had been feeling the beat of the drums in every step of his feet now he felt the music washing over them like a wave, with the beat of his heart now the crashing of water on rocks. Poe’s body dictated the flow of the music, spoke to Finn like the gentle keys of the piano and the soft rush of the violins. Finn let his head fall forward, to press to Poe’s so they were shoulder to shoulder and cheek to cheek.

The moment lasted as long as the song and this time when the beat picked up again Finn felt very detached. He felt deep regret when Poe pulled away from him and found himself following the older man, wanting so badly to be close again, to feel that intimacy that crawled beneath his skin in a low burn.

When he opened his eyes to see Poe’s he was uncertain of what he would find. But it was just Poe, looking at Finn like he too couldn’t bear to look away. His hand fell from Poe’s back but the pilot kept a grip on Finn’s hand as he stepped away, out of the common room, through hallways, to the door of Poe’s room.

Something was different since the last time Finn had last stood in front of this door and he realized when he reached forwards to touch the curls around Poe’s ear that he was the one who had changed.

The pilot punched in a code, swore when it didn’t work and tried again. “Poe,” Finn said lowly, letting his hand rest between the pilot’s shoulder blades.

“Fuck,” Poe swore again and turned to pull Finn in for a desperate kiss. It was a little too hard at first but then Poe tilted his head and whispered against Finn’s lips. “I can’t open the door.”

“We can’t,” Finn said, pulling his face from Poe’s for a second. “In the hallway?” What if people saw his butt?

Poe choked out a laugh, swore again and gritted his teeth to concentrate, punching in code after code. “Oh shit, got it,” he said, triumphant as the door beeped its consent. The door slid open and then closed behind them but Finn didn’t see it. He was lost the second Poe gripped the lapels of his jacket and tugged him in.

Today their clothes went into the same pile on the floor: Poe was in a hurry, tugging Finn’s jacket off his shoulders, divesting him of shirt and pants and somehow taking his own clothes off at the same time. “Fuck,” Poe said when their cocks pressed together. He shuddered, almost fragile in Finn’s arms as they fell on the bed. “Been wanting this for so long, Finn. Ever since—fuck.”

“Since the X-Wing?” Finn asked, shivering slightly. Goosebumps ghosted up his spine when Poe slid another condom on him, used his hands to slick Finn up and open himself up at the same time.
“No,” Poe said, letting out a long groan when Finn entered him. He reached up to grip the bars on his headboard, pushing back towards the younger man. “Fuck, since you took off your fucking helmet on the Finalizer.”

“What?!” Finn asked, thrusting motions frozen for a split second before the little brain in his cock whispered to him: go, go, go.

“Yeah, right there,” Poe groaned, eyes screwed up in desperation. “Oh, fuck.”

Finn lost himself briefly as that waterfall of pleasure thrust him over the edge. He was tumbling, down and down and crashing into Poe at the very bottom. He came back to himself slowly, shivering as after-waves of pleasure shook his every muscle.

He was slow to pull out but quick to slap Poe’s hands away from his own cock. He was determined to be the one pulling the pleasure out of the pilot and he did so with efficiency.

When they’d cooled down and cleaned up and were lying on the bed, every limb languid and exhausted from the day’s ministrations, Finn remembered what Poe had been saying what seemed like hours ago.

“What were you saying before?” he asked, room swimming around him.

“Hmm,” Poe hummed. He was tucking himself into Finn’s side, leg between Finn’s, one arm just to the side of Finn’s head, the other drapped across his chest, one hand over his heart.

“About the Finalizer?” Finn asked. Sleep was tugging at him but he could feel that this conversation was an important one.

“Oh,” Poe said. “I mean. I just knew then… that I had been missing something in my life. And that you were it.”

“But how?” Finn asked, nose on Poe’s forehead. “You didn’t know me.”

“I’ve been a rebel as long as I’ve known,” Poe said. “Grew up with it. Learned early how to read people. How to read myself.”

He was silent for almost a full minute and Finn worried he’d fallen asleep but Poe sighed long and low. “You took off your helmet and you… had this look in your eyes and I realized I’d been looking at the plastic outside and not at the person inside. And I knew you were going to be important.”

“And you knew that you wanted me to fuck you?” Finn asked.

Poe snorted, huffing the air out through his nose in a quiet laugh. “OK mister smarty pants. I guess I figured that part out a bit later.”

“How much later?” Finn asked.

“When you said you liked your name,” Poe mumbled. “Then you showed up on D’Qar, wearing my jacket and looking sexy as fuck. Didn’t want to force you to do anything you didn’t wanted though… wanted you to be sure you wanted this. On your own.”

Finn felt something in his chest tighten and loosen, a strong welling of feelings rising in his throat. “I do,” he said softly. He could hear Poe’s breathing changing beneath him, could feel the pilot’s muscles relaxing as he faded into sleep and wondered if he had heard him. “I love you too, Poe.”
Sleep tugged at him above the pilot’s happy mumblings, and Finn let himself drift slowly into the comforting embrace.

What would tomorrow hold for them? Would they explore the planet, fly more missions, or maybe stay in all day and not leave the safety of Poe’s room?

He didn’t know what the future would bring them, but he knew that whatever it was? They were ready.

They could face it together.

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**Chapter End Notes**

Thank you for coming on this journey with me, everyone! It's been a blast. Fingers crossed that the next movie does a better job of living up to these characters' potential than TLJ did, holler!

Not sure if I will write more in this series but who knows what the future will hold... certainly not me.

Comments are appreciated, concrit is unnecessary unless I have made a potentially racist blunder. I consider this story to be a published and finished work and will not be edited further.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!