"So, I’ve died how many times?” She asked, still letting the information wash over her.


She looked at him with wide eyes again. “And how many times have we had this conversation?”

“About the same amount of times that you’ve died,” he replied.

“And did I believe you each time?”

He paused, considering her words. He looked very patient for a man who had had the same conversation so many times before. “The only time it was hard to convince you was the first time it happened.”

“Well,” she said as she stood. “Let’s not waste any time. Today feels like a good day not to die.”

A Cop/Time loop AU. Detective Kylo Ren is stuck in the same day over and over again in which the same event ends each day: his partner Rey always dies before midnight, no matter what he does. Can he finally save her and solve the horrendous crime that connects all of the events? Update: Fic is now complete, with an alternate ending as Chapter 21.
For detective Kylo Ren, the past two weeks had driven him beyond the point of sheer exhaustion. The tiredness clawed at the back of his eyes as he blinked at the same line of an email he’d been reading for the last five minutes. He straightened his back, moved away from his laptop, and removed his reading glasses before trying to scrub the weariness from his face. It was 11 p.m. and he really couldn’t focus any longer. It was crushing him like a vice that he couldn’t escape from, no matter how hard he tried.

It wasn’t just the case, which was brutal to begin with: Every day for the past two weeks, a child had been abducted from somewhere in New York City. It could be from anywhere, at any time. The city ran on nervous energy, only because people always had places to be and warnings to ignore. But every morning around 8 a.m., the tiny lifeless body would be found, propped up, usually in a very public place. The perpetrator was mocking the police, including cryptic letters and messages in the media. Kylo couldn’t believe that no one had seen anything and the forensics were beyond minimal. So far, all they had was a partial thumbprint and a blurry video of someone in black, obscured by rain. They had spent the morning at one of the funerals and he’d only caught hints of shadows, dodging between tombstones. He’d been too slow but also too easily distracted.

He stretched his neck, hearing it crack as he straightened his broad shoulders. No, none of this was easy for the city-wide task force of four teams of detectives, among other investigators, dealing with a case that was terrorizing the city’s children. His dark mood was always hampered by a nervous energy from the next desk; he also had to deal with his overeager and rule-abiding new partner, Rey Niima. They’d been partnered for just about a month when they had found the first body. It had seemed like a simple—although disturbing—case, until the second child disappeared within the next twenty-four hours. And then the third. And then they were put on the task force, not out of experience, but because they were young and part of the initial investigation. He understood that being newly promoted meant that Rey was extra careful with every piece of paperwork and dotted line, but this case was not going to be solved by her constant attitude to bicker with him over small things.

“Do you know how much more overtime we have left?” She asked, softly from her desk across from his. The house would have been empty on any other night. It still felt like midday now, despite the hour. He let his hatred for the perp bleed towards her voice as he thought about her words and her tone. She was an idiot.

He rolled his eyes. “I thought that, for the task force, they lifted the limit.”

She had been careful around him most of that evening. He’d shouted at her in front of the other members of the team after the last boy’s funeral that morning and hadn’t really spoken to her either, other than directly about the case. Just hearing her British tones again brought him back to those feelings and he gritted his teeth. She cleared her throat.
“I was just checking with the union…” she started to say before her mouth snapped shut at his glare. “But I guess it’ll be fine.”

“We have to get ahead of this guy, Rey. At this point, I’d volunteer. I can’t deal with seeing another dead kid.” He shook his head and sighed, letting out a frustrated groan that ran deeper than the case.

“Look, let’s head home. Start off after we’ve slept a little,” she said, closing her laptop and picking up a folder from her desk about the last child, Mathilda Windu. The other team was still following leads, taking over for the night shift. Rey and Kylo should have been home two hours ago, but they wanted to compare their notes again on the previous cases and try to figure out the pattern. They weren’t really comparing with one another, but with their computers while viciously ignoring each other.

There wasn’t a pattern that he could see and that enraged him.

He also snatched up the two most recent files and promised himself he would still try to get more than four hours of sleep tonight. He saw her smile weakly at him as they passed again in the hallway. He should try to get to know her, or at least offer to walk her to the subway or even drive her home, but he still resisted it. She had to learn that people did not always respond to a pretty face and enthusiastic demeanour.

He drove home, mulling over the day. He still couldn’t believe that parents dared to let their children out of their sights. One kid had even been taken from a movie theatre in the middle of the day. The parent had said she’d just looked away to check her phone outside the theatre salon and couldn’t believe that someone could just walk her child right by her until he flatly pointed out that there was always the emergency exit. It had been rigged so that the alarm wouldn’t go off. His name was Evan Piell and he was seven—they had found him in the playground of his school. Whoever was doing this either had a list or was very lucky. Either way, he didn’t seem to be afraid of performing his crimes in plain sight.

Kylo went upstairs to his apartment, poured himself a strong drink and flipped through the folder. It was after midnight now and his head suddenly felt very, very heavy. He eyed the glass and wondered just how strong that drink had been. He was rarely this sleepy, despite being exhausted to the bone. His thoughts often kept him from sleeping peacefully. He pushed on, reading the folder and abandoning the drink. His eyes kept feeling heavier and heavier, like someone was forcing him towards rest. Without thinking, he stumbled to bed. He collapsed on top of his quilt just as the clock hit 2 a.m.

With a shiver and a jolt, he awoke when his alarm starting to chime at 5.59 a.m. The beeping lasted for a minute as he forced himself to wake up, before it switched automatically to the morning news.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

He half-listened to the report while half-zoning out. His mind needed stimulation while simultaneously demanding sleep. Fuck his head. There was so much to do today and he dreaded all of it.

He was forced fully awake by a single knock on his door and the sound of an envelope sliding under it. From across the apartment, he scrambled to reach and open the front door. The hallway was empty when he looked outside. Damn.
Carefully, he retrieved a pair of evidence gloves from his pants pocket. The handwriting on the envelope was neat and tidy. He grimaced when he saw it was addressed to Ben Solo. It had been so long ago that he had tried to put his old name behind him. Now it was staring him in the face, mocking his imperfections.

This case suddenly had an even darker, more personal shadow cast over it.

He carefully set the envelope aside, opening it with a kitchen knife. He knew that the procedure would be to call the forensics team, but part of his resolve was shaken by the fact that there was a kid out there and this could be part of it.

Written in the same careful hand as the back, the note was on a small piece of firm paper.

*One more to find today. Two more to try to also save today. You will have to choose, Ben Solo, between him or her. The clock is ticking. See you tomorrow.*

He had his phone to his ear before he could fully process the words. Rey picked up after one ring. He didn’t know why he felt compelled to call her first rather than the task force leader, but he did.

“Yeah, Niima?” She sounded out of breath. She must have been out running, he guessed.

“Yeah, it’s Ren. I just got a letter from our perp. He slid it under my door this morning and…” he started.

“What? He was there? Wait right there, what’s your address again?”

He sighed and gave it too her, along with the door code. Might as well get this over with.

“Perfect, I’m only a couple of blocks away. Wait right there.” She quickly clicked off.

This was going to be a very, very long day, he could feel already. He couldn’t do much more than stare at the note until a large bang from his window made him jump. He glanced out on his balcony and saw a dead crow lying bloodied on the ground. Opening the door to look at it, he heard a siren in the distance followed by his neighbour’s dog barking from the next balcony over.

Rey’s knock on the door distracted him from the scene. Sighing and mentally preparing himself to see her, he ambled over to the door. She was covered in sweat in a pink sports bra and black running pants. She deposited her backpack roughly on the ground and looked at him intensely.

“What did the note say? Have you already called it in? Did you see him?” She asked, rapidly, before grabbing her bottle of water to take several deep drinks. He normally ran every other day, but since the case it had been hard to force himself to do it. Seeing her standing there reminded him that this was another thing that they could maybe do to become a better team, but he pushed it aside. He didn’t want to be her friend no more than be her coworker.

“Here.” He lifted the note up to show her. “I wasn’t able to catch him and the cameras in the hall don’t work the best on most days. I was waiting for you before calling it in.”

She nodded, looking eagerly at the note. “So, he’s threatening to take two kids today, that’s a change in pattern. Maybe we are finally getting close to him?”

“He also came by my apartment Rey. He’s moved up to taunting us directly, personally. And we haven’t had a lead that’s went anywhere yet. How in the hell would we be getting close to him?” He snapped, feeling drained and aggravated by her simple-mindedness.
She looked at him with wide eyes before biting her lip and looking away. She sipped at her water bottle. “I’m… I’m sorry.”

“Just… just think before you speak sometimes,” he said, knowing that it was very much pot-calling-the-kettle-black thing.

She shook her head. “Just forget about it. We need to call this in. They might be able to find something on the note or in the hallway. We could get lucky. Can I take a shower while we wait? I brought my clothes with me and was just going to change when I got to work.”

He could only sigh and nod, ignoring the strangeness of the request. Rubbing his eyes, he realized that he needed to shower and change at some point as well to feel human. Whatever human felt like these days, anyway. He made the call and sat on his couch and let his eyes glaze over, staring at the city.

The circus arrived when Rey was showered and changed. She was drying her hair when the currently conscious part of the task force arrived. Captain Lor San Tekka was there, which surprised Kylo. As the leader of the task force, the captain was taking the case very, very personally, but was rarely on the scenes. He eyed the note carefully before nodding.

“We’ll have Dameron and his forensics team study this,” he looked at him firmly. “We are… we are waiting for the report about the Windu child.”

Kylo watched as two other senior detectives, Ki-Adi Mundi and Oddy Muva, checking the area around his door. The forensics team was scaled down, since it wasn’t an active crime scene. Still, Poe Dameron and his assistant, Bebe Octavius, were checking every part of his door and carpet. It wasn’t likely there would be any prints or hair but something would be nice.

“Come by the precinct as soon as you’re prepared for the day,” Tekka said, his voice steady. He saw the wrinkled state of Kylo’s clothing and his bleary eyes. “We will hold an emergency meeting and then…,” he paused to check his watch and grimaced. It was 7.45. “And then we will deal with whatever comes next.”

The stoic older man nodded and left, taking the rest of the team with him. Rey hung around, fixing her blouse.

“I can wait for you…” she said, slowly.

He nodded, gruffly. “Make some coffee. For both of us. If you can figure out the machine.”

She looked like she was going to say something in response, but just nodded, her brown ponytail bouncing as if to defy him.

He stumbled to the bathroom, suddenly remembering he’d have to take care of the dead crow at some point too. He rolled his eyes at his reflection. There really wasn’t much he could do at this point other than push forward. The threat of having two children being taken that day, along with the intrusion onto his own privacy weighed on him as he showered. The stream of water was hot and he felt gradually more awake. How could he have been so slow as to not catch the perp? God, he was losing his edge.

He towelled off and wandered to his bedroom to change. After putting clean clothes, he was reholstering his gun when there was a tiny knock on the half-open bedroom door. “I know you take it black.”

Rey was lurking in his doorway, holding a mug. So, she could figure out a coffee machine. He took
it and gave her a tight smile in thanks. He sipped at the warm beverage and sighed at the sensation. It actually tasted better, somehow from her touch, than it usually did.

“It isn’t rocket science to work a coffee machine, Kylo. I’m actually the one that fixes it at the station when it breaks down,” she said. “And I know there have been at least two times when it was you who broke it.”

“Better I punch the coffee machine than the lab tech who lost important tests.” He shrugged, slowly getting back to himself.

“You should probably pack a bag, you can’t stay here if the perp knows where you live,” she said. “Captain’s orders.”

He felt his shoulders slouch in annoyance but they were right. She was right. He checked his watch. 8.05. “Look, I’ll come back and pack later. We’d better get going. There should be news…soon. We’ve wasted so much time.”

She nodded, finishing the last of her coffee and setting it on the counter. He took two more long sips before leaving his half-empty mug beside hers. These things could wait.

She rode with him in his car, the one that they normally operated out of. She realized that she had forgot her running bag back at his apartment and he shrugged it off. They had other priorities.

They arrived at the station just as the news hit. The little girl was found sitting at a table of a café not far from his apartment. She was only a few hours dead. He had her with him when he was at the apartment. The dread swept over his body and he swayed slightly. Rey put a hand on his back and he startled and glared at her.

The task force meeting was subdued as they gathered in the conference room. There would have to be another press conference, but that could wait. They weren’t in control and the city was coming down on them hard. Standing in the hallway, he noticed both the DA, Sheev Palpatine, along with one of his assistant, Amilyn Holdo, talking to the captain. Kylo eyed them as he walked by. The FBI were being brought in soon, since this had terrorized the city for a half a month and there was no progress. All of it felt like his fault.

Tekka addressed the room of exhausted and on-edge police officers and technicians. He pointed out the facts that he knew at that moment. The girl was gone and her autopsy would be done as soon as possible. The forensics team was on scene and they were looking for any sort of camera evidence. Then, he turned to the threat left at Kylo’s. Several heads turned towards him and then quickly back to the captain. Kylo was seething the entire time.

“We need to go check out the scene,” he whispered to Rey. “We should go now.”

She shook her head. “We should wait to be told what to do as part of the team.”

“This isn’t just about the team anymore, he’s after me somehow and I can’t let that happen,” he said, through clenched teeth.

They were dismissed and the captain turned to his assistant to start preparing for the media press conference. Kylo stormed off and went straight to his desk. He sat down, not sure what to do next. He couldn’t just wait around for someone else to make a decision when there was a ticking clock.

One of the other detectives who was managing the tip line, Mundi, suddenly stood from his desk, phone in hand. “He’s got another one!”
The office both gasped and froze at the same time. Kylo couldn’t control himself and turned and kicked his trashcan across the room. Everyone seemed to accept and simultaneously reject his frustration. They were professionals; they should be able to handle this.

He was taking deep steady breaths when the captain returned. He quickly pointed at Rey and Kylo to head out, before he disappeared into his office. The press conference now had two purposes; this kid might be reported as missing as a mistake so it was important that he was found, so that they could focus on the true crime at hand.

They headed out towards Staten Island. The task force was city and force wide, but since the first incident had occurred in their precinct, they were tasked with leading it. He was gripping the wheel tightly the entire time.

The light they had been stopped at turned green and he started to inch ahead when Rey suddenly gripped his arm to stop. A truck screamed through the intersection, running the red and nearly ploughing into them. Breathing heavily, they looked at one another.

“Our lucky day,” Rey said. Kylo didn’t respond. He thought about chasing the driver down, but would leave that to the traffic cameras.

Finally, they reached the apartment of the missing child. The mother was overcome with worry, weeping onto the shoulder of a liaison officer as the other task force members busied themselves around the apartment. Another forensics team were there, mostly combing over the front yard.

Muva came up, flipping through his notebook. “It’s a little boy. Elias D. Antonio.” He handed them both a school picture.

“Is she sure that he was taken?” Kylo asked, studying the dark-haired eight-year-old boy in the picture. He was missing two teeth and wearing an orange sweater. Rey was shaking her head, taking out her notepad to start making notes. She moved to sit next to the mother and the other officer to begin the interview process. The first forty-eight hour rule was out of question. They had less than twenty-four hours and they needed to hit the ground running.

Muva licked his lips. “She swears. She was in the kitchen and he was putting on his shoes by the front door. She thought that he would be fine if he was in the house, so she went to put some clothes to dry before taking him to school. Front door was wide open when she got back.”

He paused and Kylo raised an eyebrow.

“And…he left a note here.”

“Again?” Kylo nearly yelled. “Is it consistent with the one from this morning?”

“Looks like it,” the fellow detective answered.

“Fuck.” Kylo mumbled under his breath.

“What did it say?”

“Tick tock, Solo.”

The world tilted a little as Kylo took in the words. “I…I have to talk to the captain.”

He left Rey behind to ride with another detective after only briefly telling her what he was doing. She didn’t need to know more; this was about him after all. He drove back without really thinking.
Would they pull him off the case? Why was there a sudden focus on him?

Some homeless person was shuffling his shopping cart across the street, causing Kylo to stop his car. He glared at the man, honking his horn. “Come on! Before I arrest you!”

The man grinned at him with dirty broken teeth before he limped on, taking his trash with him. Kylo noticed a bright red shirt on top of the random cans and bags. It was strange for something clean to be amongst the garbage. The man’s skin had looked scarred, as if it had been burnt long ago. His hair was matted and dirty and in patches. Why was he so slow?

Everything was beyond aggravating.

Tekka was waiting for him in his office, being distracted by the constant ringing of his phone and steady stream of people buzzing around.

“I heard what they found,” he said, closing the door to his room. “You have to tell me exactly what is going on, right now.”

Tekka already knew about him changing his name so he could avoid bringing up why he had done it again. Instead, all he could do was shake his head. “To be honest, I have no idea. Has anyone else on the team been threatened? Or mentioned in the media?”

The captain shook his head. “Up until now, it’s just been general threats against us all. Why would he personally come after you is something we need to figure out. When Rey gets back, I want the two of you to go through the cases again and double check that there is nothing in any of their backgrounds that might be connected to you in some way.”

“But we didn’t notice anything earlier, why would we find something now?” Kylo snapped.

Tekka raised a hand in warning. “Because now we have a new angle to all of this. This may be personal for you without you even knowing it.”

Returning to his desk, Kylo sat down and stared at the folders that covered it. He wandered to the secondary conference room, filled with pictures and details of each case. Crime scene photos were paired with school photos along every wall. Elias’s photo was pinned up on a new part of the wall. He sat down at the table in the centre of the room and just let it all overwhelm him. Other detectives and cops were looking at the details but he felt alone in that room. Rey returned, her notebook still in hand.

“We’re still checking the neighbourhood but I think that he’s long gone,” she said. “One neighbour did think that she saw a black car circling the block, but she couldn’t get a make or a plate.”

“It’s better than nothing,” he answered.

She cleared her throat. “Kylo, let’s go get something to eat. You need to tell me if there’s anything you think could help us figure out why he’s suddenly after you.”

He wanted to glare at her and push her away, but instead he gave her a rough nod before standing. She guided him to a nearby sandwich place, placing him at a table before going up to the counter. Kylo was staring out the window when he could have sworn that he saw the same homeless man from earlier standing across the street. It was impossible; that was in another part of a large city. He scrambled from his seat to stalk across the street and confront the man.

“Why are you following me?!” He shouted, drawing bystanders. He looked at the cart and noticed the red shirt. It was the same man.
“I’ve got a letter for you,” the man said, pulling out an envelope that was smudged by his dirty hands. “From a mutual friend.”

Snatching the envelope without thinking about fingerprints or evidence, Kylo read the note. *She’s next. If you don’t decide.* He panicked and thought about any female children that he knew and there wasn’t much of a list.

He didn’t know what it meant because he honestly couldn’t think of a single child that he knew by name, but he was not going to let that man get away. “Come on, you’re coming with me.”

Rey had run up to them at this point, looking confused. “What’s going on?”

“He’s been following me,” he handed her the note. “Lunch can wait, we need to figure out what he knows.”

She nodded roughly. Together, they brought the man and his junk to the station. It was there that the red t-shirt was identified as Elias’s by his weeping mother. They had a suspect now, but where was the boy? The other detectives took over the questioning, reading Kylo’s mood from being provoked as too grave to get real answers from the strange man. Of course he didn’t have ID. He wasn’t in the system either. And it would take days to analyze everything in his cart.

Rey had forced him to sit at his desk and actually eat. He glared at her as he chewed his sandwich. “I don’t think he did it,” Kylo said. “And I don’t think he’s going to tell us much.”

She looked a little more hopeful than he felt but she still gave him a light nod of agreement. “Kylo, do you have any children? Do you know any? Relatives? Friends? He’s going after a little girl and we need a list.”

“I don’t have children,” he shook his head. “And I don’t know any in this city. I thought about that when he gave me the note. I’m not stupid. I don’t really have friends. Work comes first.”

“Not even like a neighbour?”

“It’s an adults only building.”

“So it’s a dead end if we can’t figure out what that means.” She pursed her lips. “Let’s go review the connections again and see where we might fit into this.”

“We?”

“I’m your partner,” she said. “I’m here to support and help you.”

Could she just stop? He followed, not knowing what else to do. The next few hours were spent going over the details again and he was filled with nervous energy the entire time. At some point, Dameron came by to give them some results. He lingered a little too long looking at the new picture, looking on with his usual overly emotional eyes.

“Rey, you’ve gotta find this one.”

“We have a good lead with the homeless man,” she reassured him, guiding him away from the picture and out the door. “Work hard and we’ll get closer.”

The man nodded and left. Kylo raised an eyebrow at the interaction and let it slide.

Muva returned to the room with a grim look on his face. “We’re getting nothing out of him. He just
keeps repeating that your mutual friend is coming and that ‘she’ is next. I really, really hate people like this. But it makes you understand why he’s homeless.”

“I still want to talk to the trash man,” Kylo mumbled. “Maybe he’ll talk to me since I some how know someone involved with this.”

She looked at him with caution and Muva shrugged. “We’re keeping him twenty-four hours while the shirt is processed, at least. I think that he’s happy to be indoors for a night. He’s in room two. Just don’t punch him or anything.”

Kylo glared and quickly moved to the interview room. The homeless man was staring at the wall, not moving or talking. There was a full glass of water sitting beside his right hand. He didn’t move when Kylo entered the room.

Putting on his most neutral face, he sat across from the man. “How do you know me? What is all of this about?”

“You will know soon enough,” the man finally responded. “He will break you.”

“Who? Our mutual friend?”

“Yes.”

Kylo pulled out the copy of the note. The original was in plastic, being examined. “Who is she?”

The man didn’t answer and returned to staring at the wall. Kylo sat across from him for fifteen minutes before exploding. “Tell me who she is!”

He grabbed the man by his dirty jacket and brought him to his feet. The water spilled to the floor. Rey and another officer burst in and he quickly released the man as his partner pushed him to a safe distance. She patted his arm, trying to calm him down.

“Enough, Kylo,” she tried to sound reassuring, but it was just annoying to him. “Come, I’ll help you…”

“Stop it,” he pulled away. “The last thing I need is you treating me like a child who needs to be helped. You know what would help me, Rey? Solve the case!”

He left her standing there, stunned, and turned to leave. He made it to the nearest men’s room and dropped inside. Once again, he stared at himself in the mirror. He looked tired and practically haunted by this day. His jaw was set angrily and his eyes were dark. He’d be sent home if he didn’t get this under control. He was splashing cool water on his face when he heard the door open. In the mirror, he was joined by the DA Palpatine. He rolled up his well-tailored sleeves to wash his hands.

“I can see that it’s not going well?” The older man remarked. “That can be so very frustrating.”

Kylo didn’t answer. He simply narrowed his eyes at his own reflection in the mirror.

“You know, I knew your father when he was on the force. And your mother, through her political career,” he turned to lean against the still damp counter. “But that was a lifetime ago.”

“Is there any point to this conversation?” He snapped. “Sir?”

“Just that you are an important part of this investigation,” he replied. “So watch your temper.”
Kylo was alone again and he couldn’t keep his anger tempered any longer. With one hard strike, he connected his first against the mirror, punching a shattered hole. The glass cracked slightly around it. He left the washroom, his hand still bleeding and went to sit at his desk so he could seethe.

“Kylo, your hand…” Rey said, standing instantly in reaction. Then, she stopped to glare at him.
“I’m not supposed to help you.”

“I’m glad we understand one another,” he shot back, grabbing a roll of gauze from his drawer. His knuckles were only slightly bruised and torn up. It would sting for a few days but, otherwise, he’d experienced worse.

The room was always filled with phones ringing and people talking, but Kylo felt suddenly very alone; a sort of quiet had fallen over his thoughts. The adrenaline from punching the mirror had somehow calmed him down. In the silence of his mind, he realized that he needed to apologize to his partner. She wasn’t doing any of this on purpose and it was his reactions that were making him more upset. She was younger than he was, so she had so much left to learn.

“Rey…” he started.

The building suddenly shook from an impact. Was it a bomb? What was happening? It didn’t smell or sound like an explosion. He jumped to his feet, giving Rey an apologetic look as they all went to investigate what had happened. At the entrance to the public, someone had crashed a truck into the door. If he didn’t know better, he could have sworn it was the same truck that had nearly crashed into them before. None of this was happenstance anymore.

The driver, dressed in black, had scrambled out of the cab before anyone could grab him. Kylo suspected that they weren’t going to find much out about the vehicle, other than it was stolen.

They didn’t evacuate the building, but they did cordon off the entrance. They’d have to come and go from the other three exits. Another headache. He went to the coffee pot and frowned when it was empty on his way back from watching the accident investigators start to set up. As he walked back to his desk, he passed another interview room. Poe was in there, speaking with the mother of the missing boy. Everything was making him suspicious but forensics techs had their tasks. With his blood pumping, everything felt like it should mean something; this was an overreaction and paranoia would get him nowhere. He’d learnt that lesson long ago. He stopped by one of the other coffee pots and grabbed two mugs. He set one down on Rey’s desk.

“Is this your way of apologizing?” She asked, with a light smile.

“Thank you,” he said, then sighed. “Thank you for...just thank you. I feel like I’m going insane.”

She nodded. “I understand.”

They worked in relative silence for a couple of hours, pausing briefly to eat, before the captain called them into the evening meeting. He looked at them all gravely before clearing his throat.

“The homeless man escaped,” he said, his hands gripping the podium. “He fled custody after stabbing two transport personnel.”

Kylo could only slump down in his chair. This was the worst day of his career and potentially his life. Everyone looked defeated, except for Rey who went to the clue room, as they were starting to call it, to review her notes yet again. When he joined her, he noticed that it was nearly 11.30. They had to go home and it was his turn to force her.

“Rey?” he said, entering the room.
She looked up from her notes. “So far, the only thing I have is that two of the kids went to the same school, but not at the same time. I found a janitor that worked there and then at another school that one of the other children went to. I might as well be connecting them by their favourite colours because this is so loose.”

“I can’t piece it together either,” he sighed. “Why can’t I do this?”

“You haven’t slept and hardly eat,” she shot back, lightly. “Let’s go home. I can’t look at their faces anymore.”

“Come on,” he said, after they had gathered their things. “I’ll give you a ride.”

She looked at him brightly and he offered a small smile in return. He’d been cold to her for so long. He would probably be tomorrow, but today he could be a little easier to deal with, for once.

The parking lot was relatively unoccupied, but would have been emptier if not for the extra personnel working on the case. Tired, he fumbled for his pocket. “I forget my keys, I’ll be right back.”

“I’ll wait here,” she answered lightly, leaning against the drivers’ side door, looking up at the stars.

He greeted another officer lightly as he re-entered the building. He snatched up the keys and chided himself on being forgetful.

He was halfway to his car when he realized that his partner wasn’t alone. His feet skidded to a rough stop as his breath caught in his throat. A masked man had Rey cornered against the dark vehicle, saying something that he couldn’t clearly hear. She should be screaming, Kylo thought angrily. There were police everywhere; hell, they were the police. Shaking out of his frozen state, he charged forward, shouting the entire time and drawing his weapon. Swiftly, the man grabbed her and spun her around, a long knife pressed against her delicate neck.

“You’re following the wrong clues,” the angry voice hissed. He was using some sort of voice distorater and Kylo had no way of recognizing him. His pistol out, Kylo kept it trained on the man’s head. He was using Rey as a shield and his frustration started to rise.

“Let her go.”

“You have to follow the right clues, Ben Solo!” The voice shouted. “She chose for you. He will be spared.”

Before he could react, his response time tempered by stress and lack of sleep, the man plunged the blade into Rey’s chest, reaching around her. He pushed her away, right into Kylo’s arms. Kylo was torn between following and holding his partner. He was shouting for someone, anyone, not even hearing his own voice.

He laid her down on her back, cradling her body. She was so small; he didn't realize how light she was. She always had her shoulders straight and head up. How could she be this fragile? And pale. And dying. She was gasping and coughing up blood. He held her hand, screaming for help.

“I told him to kill me and save the boy,” she rasped out, a thin line of blood trailing down her mouth. “Don’t let me die alone, Kylo.”

She was shaking and he could only grasp her hand harder. She looked so young and broken in that instant that all of his hatred for her bled away: how could he let this beautiful girl die like this? “Don’t give up Rey!” He wanted to shout at her into listening, into not giving up. He was the
reason she was lying there dying and it made his arms grip her closer. Time closed around him and
all he could hear were her ragged breaths. Her lips were quivering before he felt her shudder and
the light fade from her eyes before the paramedics could help her. Shaking, he looked at his watch.
11.59 p.m. A rough blood smear obscured the numbers. His throat tightened at the sight. She was
already gone before the day was over.

By the time he was brought home it was nearly 1.30 a.m. and he was numb. There had been
questions that he could or did not want to answer. It felt so meaningless just to keep walking and
talking. The nature of the case had entirely changed and he was no longer on active duty. He
noticed her running bag by the door and their coffee cups on the counter. If he hadn’t been so
exhausted, he would have wept. He would have cried for her, for himself, and for all of the young
lives being snuffed out. He felt so helpless, but also selfish for feeling like any of this was about
him.

He numbly showered and watched the water run red with her blood, still lingering under his
fingernails and on his skin. Nothing helped. He couldn’t meet his own eyes in the mirror when he
left the washroom. Changed into loose-fitting pyjamas, he collapsed into bed.

He stared at the clock. 1.59.

He didn’t register it turning to 2.00.

With a shiver and a jolt, not as strong as the one from yesterday, he awoke when his alarm starting
to chime at 5.59 a.m. He should have turned it off last night, he cursed. He closed his eyes again,
wanting the world to bleed away into nothingness. He tried to go numb as the beeping switched to
the morning news.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The
temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”

His eyes flew open. It was only when he sat up that he realized he was wearing the same clothes as
yesterday.

What the hell.

Again, there was a single knock on his door and the sound of an envelope sliding under his door.

Frozen, this time he didn’t move to give chase. He knew he wouldn’t make it and was too stunned
to react in any meaningful way. This should mean that she’s still alive. He had to check. He just
had to know. His hands were shaking so much that he nearly dropped his phone when he went to
dial it. He grabbed it tighter and listened to the ringing.

“Yeah, Niima?”

His heartbeat quickened at the sound of her voice and he gasped. “Rey?”

“Kylo? What’s wrong?”

“You need to get here as soon as you can. Something fucked up happening.” He felt his voice get
heavy and hung up, texting her the address instead.

And like he knew would happen, a crow flew into his balcony window before she could arrive.
Chapter Summary

Kylo thinks he can stop the killer, yet fails three times. But each time, he learns something about the time loop. And none of it feels good.

See notes for warnings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Day 2

She stood there, alive and well in his kitchen, wearing the same pink sports bra and black pants as yesterday. He almost wanted to hug her. Almost.

Rey eyed Kylo suspiciously, sipping on her water bottle. “What’s going on?”

It was the second time she’d asked that and he finally shook his head and tried to untie his tongue. “Do you trust me?”

“Well, to be honest with you…” she sighed. “The past few weeks have been really rough on everyone but you’ve gone around like it’s somehow more my fault.”

“Rey, look, I’m…” he rubbed his eyes. “I just need you to believe something bizarre that I’m about to tell you…”

She was shifting her weight back and forth, impatiently, then suddenly looked down. “What’s that?”

“A note from the killer.” He said, flatly. “Do you want some coffee?”

“A note? From the killer? And it’s just lying on your floor?” She ran up to shove him slightly and pull an evidence glove from his shirt pocket. “Seriously, what is wrong with you? We need to call this in. Have you called it in?”

“No, because of the thing that’s happening!”

Holding the note in her hand, gingerly, she didn’t back down from him. “What thing that’s happening!”

“Today is…today is yesterday, or tomorrow is yesterday, or something. I don’t fucking know!”

“There is only one today Kylo,” she rolled her eyes. “You drink too much.”

“Then why is it today again?” He glared. “I’m still going to make coffee, the stuff you made yesterday sucked.”
She turned away to pull out her phone and call in the clue. He was about to tell her exactly who would be coming into the room, but still felt strangely numb from seeing her die yesterday. Today. Whatever. The way she had looked so fragile and small, beautiful and innocent, as the life slipped from her eyes. He’d seen people die before, but never his partner, despite how he felt about her. She had annoyed him the entire time that they had been together and he had reacted to her harshly, never really letting her get through to him. But she still reached out to him at the moment that she needed someone the most.

Thinking about her dead body turned him to thinking about the woman before him today. He never noticed the slight curves to her form before. The way that she was leaning against his kitchen island, glaring at him, as she talked to headquarters. Fit, but still a gorgeous form.

Shaking his head, he placed a finished cup of coffee beside her. She took it, sipped it, but still kept firm eyes on him as she hung up. “They’re coming, everyone. They might be able to find something on the note or in the hallway. We could get lucky. Can I take a shower while we wait? I brought my clothes with me and was just going to change when I got to work.”

Maybe it was the sound of her voice, repeating the exact same words, but the numbness drained out of him like a waterfall. She wasn’t dead. He knew he couldn’t save the other girl but there was a chance that…”No, fuck. Oh fuck, Rey, we can catch him.”

He let his coffee mug fall to the ground and grabbed her arm; she struggled against him and set hers on the counter, but still followed after, down the hall.

“What’s happening?”

Outside, they met the rest of the team. The same people as yesterday — Tekka, Mundi, Muva, Dameron, Octavius—looked at them with surprise when they came charging out the front door of the building.

“Captain, I know where the body will be,” he said quickly, scanning the street for anything that looked suspicious. The only thing he noticed was the newspaper stand and a few customers milling around it. He wanted to keep walking, but the captain grabbed his arm.

“I thought this was about a letter, Ren what’s happening? Niima, do you know what he’s talking about?” He looked confused and annoyed at his detectives.

“No, we don’t have time. He’s going to leave the girl a few blocks away. And he’s going to take a boy in Staten Island,” he shook away from the other man’s grip. “We have to go to both places now. Just trust me.”

Two deep breaths passed. “You will have to explain all of this later. Dameron, you and your team go upstairs and look at that note and bring it in. Ren, you and your partner aren’t dressed to go anywhere … but go to that drop site or whatever you are talking about. Muva and Mundi follow them slowly and watch from the car.” He firmly looked at Ren. “Call in the address to the boy as you go. I am putting myself out there for you, so you had better be right.”

He nodded and took off. Rey ran after him and the two other, older detectives trailed after, moving back to their car.

He called out the address of the boy as they ran to Rey and told her to text the address to the rest of the team. They were still early — it was only 6.45. They would be able to wait him out, hide around the corner and catch him in action. They didn’t know exactly when the girl was dropped, since the café only opened just before 8. They slowed down and he directed them into an alley in
the line of sight.

They’d called to tell the team the location and Kylo gave some idea about where they should park. After they stopped running, it felt cool in their shadowed look-out spot. It took him a while to realize that Rey was shivering.

“If you’re cold, why do you run like that?” He whispered in demand.

“I wasn’t planning on hiding in an cold alleyway,” she rubbed her hands up and down her arms. “What are we waiting for?”

He blinked. What was he doing? Was this the smartest thing? It had to be. “He’s going to drop the body of the girl on a chair at that café in, I think, forty-five minutes. And the other team is on its way to get the boy. Today, we stop him.”

She shook his head. “Kylo, um…”

“What?”

“We are sort of … unarmed,” her voice was small.

Fuck.

“Well, the M&Ms can do that. We can just, uh, get a good look at him,” he quickly fumbled over his words. What was he thinking, just running out of the house like that? They had had time. What if this is just some fucked up dream? Maybe it was. He was probably going to get suspended for making bizarre demands without actual evidence. His heart was racing at the realization of his massive fuck up.

“I still don’t understand why you’re pretending to know what he’s going to do,” she kept going. “And why there was a letter at your apartment that you didn’t seem to care about.”

“It’s because I already read the letter,” he snapped, glancing around the corner at the chair. The clock seemed to slow down each time he looked at the still-closed café.

Rey shook her head. “It was still sealed with I got there.”

He rolled his eyes. How could he convince her of something so ridiculous? “I already told you…”

“Well, sorry if I don’t believe you,” she sharply said in a hushed tone.

Turning away from his goal, he met her eyes. Her intensity had been part of what bothered him at first, but just the idea that she would sacrifice herself for someone else made him realize what made her a good cop. Or at least a better one than he gave her credit for. She put herself into everything that she did; why didn’t he notice that was useful before?

“Look…” he started.

A sudden screeching of tires interrupted him. Shit, he had been distracted. He bolted out of the alley with Rey close behind him. In the distance, they saw their partners’ car disappear after a dark, black car. They ran up to see the small body of the Windu girl, now tossed onto the sidewalk rather than propped up on the chair. He must have spotted them. He put his hands on his knees and stood near the girl’s small body before daring to look up to Rey.

Her eyes were wide both with the shock that the girl was dead and that he was right. Slowly, she
took a step back and shook her head.

“We missed him,” her mouth slowly forced out.

“Yeah,” he stood and smoothed his hair. “I’ll call the captain. Maybe the others will catch him. The boy had better be safe.”

They stood and waited, keeping the crime scene clean from the growing crowd of onlookers. The street was soon screaming with police cars and officers. Kylo hadn’t really moved from looking at the empty, dark face of the child. Of all the emotions that churned in his mind, one of them was a small sense of satisfaction that they were ahead of him. They’d gotten the call that the boy and his mother were fine, at home, with firm instructions not to leave the house without their police escort.

At least they believed me about him. He could almost relax as he and Rey were briefly dismissed to return to his apartment to change and then return to the station. There would be more and more questions, especially regarding the letter and his apparent knowledge about where the girl was and who might have been the next on the list. He’d stopped it. Maybe that stupid dream was worth it.

“You can take a shower first,” he said. “I’m going to clean up the mess.”

She was still eyeing him suspiciously, but went ahead. He dried up his coffee spill and picked up the pieces. He still eyed the eerily similar placement of her bag from the dream he’d had. Shaking his head, he put the broken pieces in the trash. Whatever he’d dreamt, it might have prevented another death. Well, two deaths.

When Rey emerged, he took his turn. It almost felt good to shower today, since he still felt like he had worn these clothes many more days in a row than he actually had. He met his eyes in the mirror after he was done and he looked slightly less tired. Maybe life could finally move on, if they were able to get a plate on that car and any evidence from the letter. That could put more of the pieces together.

He noticed Rey was absently looking at her phone when he briefly entered the hall to head to his bedroom to change. She had been frowning at something, but hadn’t said anything about it when she fleetingly caught his eyes. If it had been serious, she would have brought it up.

Nearly finished dressing, he reached for the drawer where he usually kept both of his regular guns. When he opened it, his heart fell.

It was empty.

At the same time he had the thought, there was a suddenly clattering and banging in the kitchen and the distinct sound of Rey grunting and fighting. His other back-up gun was across the apartment. He had to get it in time.

He burst through the bedroom door to see the same masked man holding a gun to her head. He saw an angry scratch across her face and her bloodied nose; there was also panic in her eyes. She looked desperately at him, still trying to resist her attacker.

“You are going to choose him,” the attacker hissed. “Now you lose her.”

With one swift movement, he pushed Rey away and shot her in the chest. The loud bang and the sight of her crumpling to the ground stunted Kylo’s reactions and the attacker fled. Kylo, not knowing what to do, dropped to his knees to put pressure on the wound.

Gasping, Rey shuddered. “Don’t let me die alone, Kylo.”
Same words, different time, different place. Why was this happening?

“Please, Rey, don’t give up,” he pleaded, as blood slowly seeped below her, forming a growing puddle on his kitchen floor.

Her eyes looked panicked for a few more seconds before that light—that same light—faded.

He screamed, clutching her closer.

Everything blurred out for what felt like hours, but it was only minutes. His neighbors, hearing the shot and the commotion came running over and called the police. Once again, his apartment was filled with people, but this time it wasn’t for a simple letter, but his dead partner. Again, he looked from her coffee cup to her bag by the door.

This was personal, this was about him. But why was it about him?

For some reason, they didn’t let him change before they brought him down to the station. Her body was still warm on his floor, being photographed by their own colleagues. Her empty, lifeless, but perfect body. This time she didn’t die as a sacrifice to save the boy but as a way to show him something. Why couldn’t he figure out what it was?

When he arrived at the station, one of the other detectives, Mundi, led him to another part of the station. Kylo, still in shock, finally realized what was happening when they were wiping his hands for gun-shot residue. He had been a simple, silent zombie up until then. He slowly realized that no one had really said a kind word to him about his dead partner the entire ride over.

_They thought he did it._

“What the fuck is going on?” He finally snapped out of his grief-induced trance. “Rey is dead and you are…you think I did it?”

The tech looked at him with a tight look on her face. She just shrugged, as if to say that she was only doing her job.

He looked up to glare at Mundi and another officer who he just noticed was obviously guarding the door.

“Can you tell me what’s going on?” Kylo demanded.

Mundi looked at him with sympathy. “Look, Ren, we’re all broken up here right now, but there are procedures and after this morning with the letter, and the girl, and you just telling us some random kid is going to get snatched so you could be alone with her…”

“Why would I shoot her?” He exclaimed. “She is my partner!”

“Calm down.”

“No! I have no reason to be calm. Look at me, I’m still covered in her blood!” He gestured fiercely at his clothes.

Mundi sighed. “Come with me, the captain wants to talk to you with internal affairs.”

Kylo was practically seeing red. “Why don’t you just fucking cuff me because I am not going without a fight. I had to watch some masked man shoot her in the chest and saw him stab her yesterday and I can’t deal with any of it! It’s too much!”
“See! That’s the shit that’s not right. How did she get stabbed yesterday if she got shot today? You sounded just like that this morning when you took off running. And we still haven’t talked about the letter. Who is Ben Solo? Is that you?” Mundi’s voice was sharp but steady.

Kylo slowly wiped his eyes, not really realizing he’d been crying. On his hands, was her blood. Again.

“Fine.”

Reluctantly, he sat across from the captain and the IA goon. There wasn’t much he could say. Everything he said just made them more suspicious. Eventually, another detective replaced the captain and Kylo tried again but it just wouldn’t work. Dameron came into say that there was no GSR on his hands but he could have worn gloves, since they found a fiber on his weapon. Palpatine lurked in the doorway, eyeing him but still offering a sympathetic nod at one point. He almost didn’t care. The day, this day, felt even longer than the previous one.

But he had figured out one part: if he saved the boy, he couldn’t let Rey out of his sight.

That night, in a holding cell at the station, he felt his eyes finally get heavy just after 1.45. When he closed his eyes, he prayed for the first time in a long time that he’d get another chance. And at 2.00, he was dead asleep.

**Day 3**

With a shiver and a jolt, he awoke when his alarm starting to chime at 5.59 a.m. He was almost instantly awake, grabbing at his bed sheets, almost wanting to cry. He was back in his bed, in the same clothes. He could try again.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”

But this time he didn’t wait for the letter to slip under he door. He was out of his bed in a dash and dove for the door handle and threw it open.

He was met by a dark-faced young man, wide-eyed, about to slip the note under his door. Kylo instantly grabbed the man by the neck of his jacket and hauled him inside the apartment.

“Whoa, whoa man, he just told me to drop this under your door!” the young man offered in defence.

“Who? WHO? Where is he?” Kylo demanded. “And who are YOU?”

The young man tried to squirm out of Kylo’s tightening grip. “Look, my name’s Finn. I work in the newspaper stand downstairs. You pass by me everyday, but you’ve never said hi or nothing. Some dude in black gave me $50 to slip a note under your door and run.”

“What did he look like?”

“I don’t know, he was just this white dude. Black hood, didn’t show me his face. He talked funny,” Finn was still struggling in Kylo’s hands. “Can you let me go?”
Kylo let him fall. “Fine, whatever. You’re not going anywhere until my partner and the rest of the team get here.”

He pulled out his phone and again felt his heartbeat quicken when she answered.

“Yeah, Niima?” Same breathing, same Rey.

He was silent for a second, taking it all in again. Yesterday wasn’t a dream. This was all happening again. He finally shook out of it. “Hey, Rey, can you get to my apartment as quickly as you can. I’ll text you the address.”

He hung up before she could reply.

She came up while he was still eyeing the young man in the silence that followed the crow hitting his window. He had taken the time to call in to the station as well, knowing that Rey wouldn’t like it if he didn’t.

“Finn, what are you doing here?” She asked, dropping her bag in the same damn spot again.

“You know him?” Kylo demanded.

“I run here all the time and get the paper from him,” she looked at him with disbelief. “You don’t know the people in your own neighbourhood?”

He rolled his eyes. “Look, Rey, he gave me $50 and told me to get out of here as quick as I could. Like run away. But I didn’t have time. It was like he knew I was outside the door.”

Kylo ran a nervous hand through his hair. Rey was looking at him with suspicion. Should he try to tell her again? Maybe now wasn’t the time. They needed to wait for the team and forensics, and then to take this kid to the station for questioning. Then, Kylo remembered, the race to save the boy would begin. Again, he felt compelled to run out of his apartment, to chase down the killer before he could drop the girl. She was already dead, so he quickly pushed that aside. Better to try to catch him outside of the boy’s house.

“Come by the precinct as soon as you’re prepared for the day,” Tekka said, again. “We will hold an emergency meeting and then…,” he paused to check his watch and grimaced, again. It was 7.45. “And then we will deal with whatever comes next.”

He decided that he had to stop getting enraged at everything happening again because as far as these people knew, this was all happening for the first time.

And once again, he was alone with Rey.
The first thing he did was move her bag across the room and then lock and bolt the door.

“What are you doing?”

“Moving this so you don’t forget it.”

She looked at him with confusion. “Kylo, can you please tell me what’s going on? Why did you lock the door?”

“Look,” he slowly exhaled. “Just take a shower and change so we can get ready. We can wait here for the call. It should be coming in soon enough.”

“As long as you promise to tell me what is happening.” Then, she turned to the washroom.

He had to sit down and wait, trying to plan what he was going to say to convince her. Yesterday didn’t work. He had to get through to her today. How could he convince her? How could he make sure she didn’t die today?

She emerged from the washroom, changed and fixing her ponytail. “All yours.”

“Hm.”

He showered one of the quickest showers in his life. She almost looked shocked when he came out and moved to change, also at a rapid pace. He came out with his shirt unbuttoned and still fixing his holster. Rey was leaning against the counter, checking her phone and looked at him.

“Now you are in a hurry?”

“Rey,” he looked at her, remembering the last time they stood in that kitchen. “Can you sit down?”

“We need to get going…”

“What if I were to tell you that you I’ve already lived through today. Twice,” he slowly said, sitting down at the table.

“I’d say that…

“There is only one today Kylo…and you drink too much.” They both spoke at the same time, him matching her word for word.

Her eyes widened and she sat down heavily across from him. “Lucky guess?”

“Today is anything but lucky,” he grimaced.

“So…” she started. “So tell me what happens. Today.”

“You believe me?” He asked, wanting to believe that she actually did.

She sighed. “Look, the past few weeks have been hard, so very, very hard. You haven’t really looked at me like a person until now. Maybe something is happening and maybe you’re just good at guessing. Or you’ve gone insane. But we need something to break this case. Maybe…maybe I can go insane with you.”

He wanted to jump up and hug her. But instead he just nodded, holding back.

“So, what do we do next?” She nodded in response, standing from the table.
He checked his watch. “Let’s go find the girl, before someone else has to. I can't save her, but we can save someone that trauma. It's just the way that it has to be. Then, we’re going out to Staten Island. We’ll have to borrow a different car because I think that he knows my car. Or something.”

She shook her head in agreement. “Tell me everything along the way.”

He gave her a short nod, but decided to keep the end of the day secret. Everything else, he realized, she might be able to help him with. Maybe she wasn’t such a bad partner after all. Seeing her die had brought them closer together in such a short amount of time in his eyes than their earlier weeks as partners. He was never good with feelings, but death was something that shot through his resolve. He didn't want to see her die again. He could care about her to that degree. He couldn't go further.

He told her about the first day, starting with the note and how he’d known that the paperboy would be at his door and then how he knew who would show up to the apartment. He also explained how he knew when the girl would be left and where she would be. Slowly, he explained the drive out to Staten Island, the homeless man and the missing boy’s shirt. He reached the point when the truck smashed into the station when they reached the café.

It was 8.15 and there she was, propped up in the chair like she was still alive, but she wasn’t. Again, her soft, lifeless brown eyes stared up at him and it only reminded him of Rey.

Rey, the good cop to his numb cop, quickly pulled out her phone to call it in while he gradually came back to himself, and prevented onlookers from disturbing the crime scene. It seemed useless, since he knew they wouldn’t find much.

She was studying the girl, careful not to touch her since she was clearly dead. “I believe you, Kylo. But maybe you shouldn’t tell the rest of the team.”

“You believe me?” He asked, still not quite sure he believed himself.

“Yes,” she stepped back from the body, hearing the cars approaching. “Now, let’s go to Staten Island.”

He actually smiled at her and she returned the look. They had to save the boy as a team and he couldn’t let her out of his sight. That was the only way.

They quickly explained that they had a lead to the detective who arrived, Muva, and they needed to follow it up. He just dismissed them, telling them that he didn’t need to know. Kylo had to move quickly, as Rey had taken off, quickly walking across the street and starting to move down the block.

“Come on, I know someone who lives nearby who has a car that looks nothing like a police car,” she called when he had nearly caught up with her.

She led him to a run-down bar—Takodana—on the street level of an apartment building only a few blocks away. He looked at her suspiciously; she didn’t look like she drank and he had never attended any of the few after-works they held before the case broke. He preferred to work. She didn't really enjoy them either, she had said once, but still showed up because it was something cops did, he believed. It was something his father did, but he didn’t want to do.

“Maz?” She called, bringing him inside. He was surprised that the door was open this early.

The place was empty, dirty, but not really as bad as he expected. The lamps were set low, obscuring the tattered booths and dusty floor. An ancient woman rose from behind the bar to study
them behind over-sized glasses.

“Oh, Detective Rey, wonderful to see you again!” She greeted. “Who’s this? Your new partner?”

“You’ve got me there, Maz,” Rey smiled warmly at the woman and Kylo wished that he could figure out how Rey would know this woman, in this bar. “Listen, we’re in a hurry and need to borrow your car.”

The strange woman, Maz, tossed a set of keys in Rey’s direction without a warning. “It’s outside. Take care of it! And I think that you can figure out some way for some of my parking tickets to disappear, yes?”

Rey laughed. “You know I want to, but can’t Maz.”

They were heading out the door, the visit ending as quickly as it started, when the woman called out, “Worth a shot.”

Moving around behind the bar, his curiosity overcame him. “How do you know her?”

Rey shrugged. “I told you, I don’t live too far from here. I just…know people. I’m sort of a scavenger. Looking around for people who might be useful.”

“Hm.”

They got in the car—a tiny blue Volkswagen in which his legs could barely fit—when she finally sighed.

“What does ‘Hm’ mean?” She looked at him with humor.

“It means…” he couldn’t really think of what it meant. “It means I’m thinking about it.”

She raised a single eyebrow at him and seemed to be teasing him. “Hm.”

“Shut up.” He replied with a flat tone.

For the first time in weeks, even given the past two days—or whatever they were—Kylo actually felt himself relaxing. She was actually a nice, fun, person. She was the type of person, however, that usually kept far away from him. But he let that feeling go. Now, they had a goal and a mission.

“Why do you think he sent Finn to give you a letter? Was it a taunt?” She asked from the driver’s seat.

He was still having trouble figuring that part out. “There were more letters and taunts. The entire day, it started to feel more and more like it was about me rather than the kids. And the way the day ended…it was all about me.”

“What do you mean?”

He couldn’t tell her, even if he wanted to.

“It…I’ll tell you some other time. We should probably hurry up.”

She took a wrong turn and that cost them time. Maybe his good mood had made him less edgy. All he could think about suddenly was that she was going too slow. He decided then that he would have to drive after they’d left Staten Island.
But her detour cost them time.

His phone rang and he had to swear aloud. “He’s got the boy. We were too slow, dammit Rey!”

She gripped the wheel. “But I thought we’d have time! You said we had time! Maybe he was early?!”

Taking slow and angry breaths, he turned to look out the window to avoid her questioning eyes, noticing the suddenly familiar surroundings. He had to suppress his panic because they were in a different car this time. It couldn’t be the same time. No.

The light turned green and she was a little too quick on the accelerator, trying to rush to the crime scene.

“Rey the tru—“ He caught it out of the corner of his eye, but he was too late.

The world turned white and glass exploded around him everywhere. He could both smell and hear burnt and smashed metal. Everything and then nothing hurt. His ears were ringing when he blacked out. Despite the chaos, the void took him.

Confused, he blinked awake, slowly turning his head. He couldn’t breathe and his legs felt like they weren’t there anymore. He tasted blood and one eye was stinging so much he couldn’t open it.

Turning his head, he had to look at Rey’s broken body and saw the fear in her eyes as she gasped. Her face was bloodied, but her eyes were still barely alive and panicked. The car was crushed, her side took the worst of it but they must have hit another car. He couldn’t feel half of his body and she…her body was basically broken in half. A sharp bone cut through her middle, mocking him with its pristine whiteness in a cavern of horror. He felt like they were crushed from both sides. Shaking, she still limply reached out her bloodied and broken hand.

Weakly, he tried to grab it. He saw tears form in her dying eyes. He gripped it as he saw her slowly slip away.

Coughing, he felt both immense pain, deep and brutal, unbearable agony…his lungs stung and his heart was beating too fast and then his chest clenched in a sensation that made him cough one last time. He looked once more at Rey and felt the pain start to make his vision blur…and then nothing.

It was like falling down a deep dark hole that was nothing like sleep.

Day 4

And on the fourth day, he awoke with a shiver and a jolt, but also a gasp and a shout. His alarm starting to chime at 5.59 a.m. and he instantly knocked it down, angry and confused.

From the floor, it still clicked on to the news.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”

Kylo just flopped onto the bed and let both terror and relief take over.
“So, I can die too,” he mused, dropping his arm over his eyes. "Fuck."

He could only breathe into his musty sleeve from the first day, again, listening as the paperboy slipped the envelope under his door. Time for this shit to start all over again.

-=-

Chapter End Notes

Warnings for (again) character death, harsh language, and violence.

Thanks SO much for the response. This is (again) one of my favourite types of stories. I need to start the term again soon so I might have to leave this for weekends for a while.

(Edit to past Sarah: you didn’t, you fool)
Day 4, cont.

Kylo Ren actually thought about giving up at that point, but it wasn’t in his nature to let something like this go. He could get frustrated, and threaten to quit, but there was something more to this mystery that genuinely bothered him. Rey seemed to always die and even his own death wouldn’t get him out of the time loop, or whatever it was. He was used to living days that seemed like they were the same; this was another level of frustration. Looking at his ceiling, he actually reasoned that it was a quicker way to reset it all. If everything went wrong, he could just pull out his gun and it would just be over…for that day. But part of him was afraid that ending his life and the loop couldn’t be something that he decided himself. The previous day had been partly her fault, to be fair. Maybe if he was driving and Rey wasn’t, that would have changed things. He’d have to drive from now on. Maybe he wouldn’t wake up in his bed again to the paperboy slipping the note under his door. At least he knew who it was now.

Rey had died again. The truck was either under the killer’s control or was just part of the loop or was just some fucked up coincidence. He couldn’t quite sort out how it all worked at this point. He hated not knowing things, but he needed to figure out how this all worked.

This was the third time he had seen her die and this was the worst. The sounds, smells, and dull tastes of both her death and his washed over him. In normal work, he never had to deal with car accidents, so having to see her body, broken and just part of it…not there…made him suddenly gag. He felt yesterday’s—or today’s or whatever—bile start to rise and he ran for the toilet instead of for the door. He was alive but he could never forget that image: a shattered body, reaching for him with frightened eyes that were about to fade away.

He retched into the toilet again. What could he do to fix this today? He was only throwing up yellowish, thin liquid, but just vomiting made everything hurt. It was like his bones slightly ached from being crushed, somehow. So, today was a bit of a change, to say the least.

Shutting the lid, he folded his arms and sighed. Letting his head sag on the cool porcelain, he thought about his options.

If things went as they had gone before, he would follow the same steps. First, he calls Rey about the letter. Crow hits window. She comes over, she leaves her bag, she makes coffee. The crew comes over and the captain tells him to change. She stays. The next steps to those were that she forgets her bag, and dies at some point. She makes coffee, she dies. She drives the car, she dies. In short, if she comes over, she dies.
Okay, he thought, lifting his head and wiping his mouth. Don’t call her. Let her finish her run.

He stumbled to his feet and clumsily took off his clothes and showered. No matter how much he wanted to talk to her, he needed to have a different start to today. He showered in a dull haze, still trying to figure out what to do next. He was starting to hate how much he had judged her over the course of the few weeks that they had been partners; it was strange that over two or three days, he felt closer to her than over that amount of time. Just the way that her eyes met his when she said that she trusted him was enough to want to give her everything, or at least bring her closer.

The water was starting to run cold, but he was still struggling with the last few days. And how to reconcile the fact that it still was the same day again.

‘Don’t let me die alone, Kylo,’ rang in his head. He could at least keep that promise: she hadn’t died alone the three previous days.

“Okay,” he decided that talking to himself was the best solution. “I’ve gone insane. But I need to try to save her.”

He dressed and started sorting out the plan. The killer, or the accident, couldn’t cause her death if she wasn’t in the city. So, the solution was to leave. But what about the boy and the others? He stillled, buttoning his shirt to look at himself in the mirror. What sort of cop was he if he thought so selfishly?

He had to try. This would be a test. If anything, he needed to figure out how he could end the time loop. He hated thinking that way, but the killer had forced his hand. The taunts were about him. He had to choose her over the boy. That’s what he wanted, right? That had to be the her in the note.

Stepping over and ignoring the letter, he left his apartment. He tried to remember where Rey said she ran and was able to track her down in his car. He spotted her a couple of blocks from his apartment. She was stretching her arms above her head, showing her well-toned stomach to him and the rest of the people on the street. He suddenly felt jealous and had to push it aside.

He slowed alongside her and honked.

“What are you doing?” She asked, shocked by his intrusion into her personal time.

“Get in,” he said. “I have a lead.”

Her eyes widened again but she nodded and ran around the car to the passenger side. She tossed her bag in the back and looked at him with curious eyes.

“What have you found out? Our lucky day.” She fixed her seatbelt and quickly wiped the sweat from her forehead.

He locked the doors and started driving. He didn’t know what to say, or try to convince her. What did he say yesterday, when she had believed him?

“Rey, something is happening that I can’t really explain,” he slowly said. “I know that I’ve been...hard on you the last few weeks and I’m really sorry for that. You didn’t choose to be stuck with me, but here we are. And I need you to listen to me.”

“What’s going on? Where are we going?” She nervously studied the direction that they were traveling in. They weren’t going to the station. “Please, Kylo tell me.”

“I’ve lived through today already. This is the fourth time and I can’t figure out if I’m insane or if
this is just something very, very strange dream. Rey, every day we try to catch him. And every day we can’t,” he paused. “Because you die.”

She looked at him with confusion for a moment before turning her head to study the city outside her window. He could almost hear her thoughts as she mulled the whole thing over.

“You’re my partner,” she started. “And what you just said sounds so unbelievable. But if you think what’s happening has already happened, then I need to believe you. Kylo, I know I didn’t get to pick my partner, but I’m here now. And frankly, I don’t like the sound of dying and it looks like you don’t like it either.”

“You believe me?”

She nodded. “Yes, so you’d better tell me the plan.”

He told her what he was thinking—they leave the city, go somewhere that the killer and happenstance couldn’t find them—and wait out the day. Her frown deepened the entire time he was talking.

“So, we don’t do our jobs? Kylo, I know that you think you are having a problem here, but we have to think about the children and the others on the team,” she frowned. “But I do appreciate that you are trying to save me. If that’s really happening, because I’m beginning to doubt that it is. Have you listened to yourself?”

There was a long stretch of silence. He didn’t stop the car even after she tugged at her seatbelt and fiddled with the door. They were slowly leaving the city and she cleared her throat.

“Can you promise me one thing?” She asked, looking at him firmly.

“Okay.”

“If this doesn’t work today, then promise me that you won’t do this again. Whatever this is. Kylo, we have an obligation. We need to protect our people. Until a few minutes ago, I felt like you hated me and everything I tried to do. But if whatever you say is happening is actually going on, then I am willing to die to help others. I still don’t understand why you are trying to protect me.” She looked at him with the same determination she always did, but he was blind to it before.

He was quiet, gripping the wheel. “Have you ever seen a person die before?”

She looked at him and then glanced away. “No, not really.”

Everything was quiet, except for the sounds from the street outside the car, whizzing by.

They stopped at a red light and he could finally look at her. He reached out, slowly, to take her hand. It was the first time that he’d really touched her when she was alive. He didn’t know what guided his hand. Maybe it was the lingering faces he saw of her dead. She looked at him with a bit of surprise, but then gently squeezed his hand as his face softened.

“Rey, I’ve seen you die three times,” he met her eyes and she seemed to recognize the seriousness in his tone. “I want to try something, anything, to make it different.”

She blinked in confusion, but slowly nodded. They were silent the rest of the drive, but she never let go of his hand until he needed to make a turn.

They didn’t talk. He just drove, trying to get her out of the city and away from all of this. When
they finally left the dense and populated streets, he let out a long and deep breath that he didn’t realize he’d been holding.

“Rey, I promise. If this doesn’t work…then I won’t do it again,” he finally said.

She gave him a small smile. “I won’t know either way, would I?”

He snorted. “I guess.”

They drove for another hour before they needed gas. They pulled up to a small station and she went to the washroom to change. What was he doing? Would this even work? He started to gas up the car and leaned against it and took a quick look at his phone. He’d turned it off before they left and messages flooded in when he turned it on again. As quickly as it was on, he turned it off again. He spotted her phone, sitting on the passenger seat, and switched it off too, hoping that she wouldn’t notice.

He was paying for the gas when she rejoined him.

“So, what now?” She was adjusting her blouse, not looking as sharp as she had the previous days. She needed to shower, he slowly comprehended. She looked at him expectantly, as if he should know what he was doing.

He could only shrug. “We find a hotel. We stay there until midnight.”

He was testing her patience, and she folded her arms and reluctantly nodded. “I don’t like this.”

“Neither do I.” Part of that was a lie.

Walking back to the car, he kept watching her face. He still couldn’t believe that she was going along with all of this, but here she was. He had to try something different to get his head on straight. He was a determined cop, and a good detective, if anything. Despite his reputation for volatile outbursts, he wanted to catch the killer. This was somehow about him, so it bothered him to take her and run, but at this point he was almost out of ideas and that made him itch. He didn’t run out of ideas. There was always a solution to a problem, even if he had to force it.

They found a road-side motel a bit outside of the city and she practically bolted from the car when they came to a stop. He’d been quiet for another hour and she seemed to be regretting all of it at that point. He had watched her getting angrier and angrier with every mile that they drove. He got them a room and she was pacing outside. When he joined her, he finally realized why she was so agitated.

“Why did you turn off my phone?” She demanded.

“Rey, he could be tracking us, somehow,” he said, flatly.

She kept pestering him as he led her to the room.

“How could he be tracking us? This is about murdering children, why do you think this is about you?” She argued as he opened the door.

He had to hold back his eye roll. “I told you. He paid the paperboy to slip a note under my door. Then, when he took the boy…”

“Did you tell them about the note? Did you call it in?” She was getting more and more upset and he didn’t understand why. Didn’t she realize that he was trying to save her?
He slammed the door shut, his palm firmly pressing against the door, and she turned to glare at him again before he could speak.

“God damn it, Rey, I told you! If I don’t keep you safe, then you are going to die and I can’t do that again!” He shouted, feeling the exhaustion and strain of the past few days — or todays, whatever — take over. He felt tears start to sting his eyes and ran his hand over his face. This entire situation was so utterly fucked and he hated being a coward and run, but what else was he supposed to do.

She looked ready to argue with him but when she noticed his face, the fight seemed to die on her lips. The room felt suddenly too warm and the air heavy. He couldn’t take his eyes off of her mouth. Her face was flushed from arguing, but her lips looked like soft, delicate rose petals.

“Fuck it,” he said, more to himself than anything else.

He grabbed her and forced his mouth against hers in a bruising and desperate kiss. She resisted, trying to push him away, but he wrapped his arms around her, needing to feel her alive. He cupped her face, bringing her closer as her arms were limp at her side. He wanted to taste her and feel her and be nearer to her. He softened his grip when she started to respond, reaching up to touch his face. His bitter need transformed to tenderness as she opened her mouth to his tongue. She tasted sweet and exactly as he imagined. She tasted like she acted: strong and beautiful. The feel snaked down his body, igniting desire that was borne out of frustration and pain. His head was spinning and it was just for her.

His heart started to beat quicker when she started to return the kiss with her usual intensity. She wanted him back. She was alive. The body in his hands wasn’t bleeding or broken, dying from the hands of an unknown foe whom he couldn’t stop. In their safety, he wanted to be tender and learn her body in its pure rather than destroyed form. He clumsily guided her towards one of the dingy hotel beds, trying to touch her everywhere that he could. Her firm stomach. Her delicate breasts, hidden beneath her white button-up shirt. Her well-toned ass. His hand drifted across the front of her pants and she gasped into his mouth, stroking his arms. God, she felt so good.

She stumbled backwards onto the bed and he covered her, needing to feel more. His larger form pressing against her, he felt how their bodies fit together perfectly. Her legs were spread for him, drawing him closer. The past few days had been too much and he didn't realize how much he needed this release. He needed her too much. How had he missed her before this?

He broke away from her mouth to nip lightly on her neck and she moaned. It was a soft sound that dwarfed her pain-filled gasps that echoed in his mind. God, did he want her. He wanted to erase the memory of her being dead with the woman in his arms at that moment.

“Kylo, Kylo, wait.” She gasped as he reached for the button to her pants.

He was breathing heavily but stilled his hand. “Rey, I…I don’t know what to do anymore.”

He looked down at her on the off-brown hotel bed spread. She gazed at him with both fear but also loose trust. That’s what he thought he saw, at least. Gently, she tucked a strand of hair behind his ear. She looked soft, but the questioning in the corners of her eyes made him sit up, shifting slightly away from the object of his body’s desire.

“Just…slow down.” She finally said. “We’re safe here. I have so many questions but tell me…tell me what you need.”

He knew what he needed. He slowly gathered his thoughts, still searching her face. Calmness had
settled into her eyes, but he was still drawn to her lips. He’d reddened them. Now, there wasn’t a trail of blood. They were warmed from his kisses. He’d kissed her and wanted more. “You, Rey, I need you.”

It was her who lifted her head this time to meet his mouth and he openly moaned at the sensation. He wasn’t forcing her anymore. Now she was there with him. He thought about how she looked in her running outfit and how it set off her stomach and thighs. She was pretty before, but he had grown attracted to her in this today. He might be going insane, but her lips were on his and he needed more.

With one swift motion, he ripped open her shirt and she gasped.

“That cost me $40 what are you…oh!” She exclaimed but then the rest of her thought faded into a dull moan as he started to kiss her breasts, through her bra. He’d never thought she was this attractive before all of this, but now that was the only way he could picture her. He couldn’t solve this case, so he wanted to solve her. She hummed lightly as he reached down to massage her cunt through her pants. He heard her start to breathe faster as he kissed back up her neck before meeting her mouth again.

He bit her ear and she inhaled again, grabbing at his back to pull him closer. That made him pause and meet her eyes.

“Rey, I…”

“Shh.” She whispered. “Don’t talk.”

Then she gently kissed him again, forcing him to sit up. She kept her mouth on his and reached behind to undo her bra. He took the hint and swiftly started unbuttoning his shirt. He fumbled with the buttons and she laughed, lightly, moving her hands to help him. Their eyes locked again and he was lost. Her nipples were the same shade as her lips. On any other day, this would be so wrong but right now, right then, he needed her.

She brushed her hand against his cheek. “It’ll be okay.”

He wanted to believe her. He nodded, and reached down to the button on her pants. She hissed but nodded, laying herself back down on the bed. He gently undid the clasp and slid her trousers down. He shifted, moving to pull off her clothes.

He looked down at her, standing at the foot of the bed.

“You’re so beautiful,” he said in a hushed tone.

She sat up on her elbows, looking a bit embarrassed. “I haven’t showered. You can’t say that.”

He shook his head, reaching to undo his belt. “Rey, you’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen. I can’t believe I didn’t see that before.”

Sitting up to her knees, she reached for his hand to help him with his pants. She still looked shy and he wanted to fix that.

He felt like saying more, but couldn’t find the words, he was too lost in her. Her hands met his and she gently helped him out of his clothes. Through his boxers, she ran her hand over his erection and everything felt so perfect in that moment. The way she was touching him and the way that he could touch her made the last few days feel like nothing. The adrenaline from running and being safe had taken over. Her soft hands brushed his sides and gripped the waistband of his boxers.
“What if there is no tomorrow?” He asked.

She placed a soft kiss on his cheek. “Then live today.”

Yes, live today. He moved quickly to help her hands remove the last of his clothes, then let her pull him back down to the bed. His hands found the soft lines of her underwear and he started to remove them. She laughed lightly as he fumbled and she swiftly took them off, wiggling out of them. The scent of her made him even harder; she wanted him and he could feel that in the air.

He had to touch her, had to feel her. He ran his hand between her legs, teasing them open. She was wet for him and that made everything more real. He may have started this, but she wanted him. Still wanted him. He felt up and down her slit, studying her body and how to make her feel pleasure.

He kissed down her body. He wanted to taste her and make her moan again. Both his hands and tongue travelled down her body and she made small gasps with every movement. First her breasts, then her navel. And finally, his goal.

Finding her clit, he licked it gently and he heard another gasp. He started to touch her, lightly at first and then faster. When he changed the tempo, she gripped at his hair. The intimacy of the moment washed over him as he looked up at the look of joy oh her face. As much as he wanted to be inside her, this was just as good. This was perfect. She tasted clean and sweet and it dawned on him that he never wanted to do this to another woman other than her. It hit him in the chest and he tried to push the thought away as quickly as it came. He swirled his tongue around her most sensitive point and gently slipped a finger into her. She moaned, loudly, and he never wanted to hear another sound again.

“Kylo, oh God, please…”

Looking up at her, he paused.

“What?” She asked, blinking at the sudden stop in his motions.

“Can I…can I be inside you?” He managed to say, not knowing another way to put it.

She bit her lip, closed her eyes, and nodded. “Yes.”

Shifting, he grabbed a pillow from beneath her head. He forced her to move, putting it beneath her lower back. He didn’t know how long he would last; her body was waiting for him and he wanted the release.

He couldn’t be slow anymore and grabbed her ass, pulling her towards him as he entered her. Maybe it was too quickly because she tensed and that made it feel both wrong and right. Her body was tight and he nearly came after two thrusts. When she wrapped her legs around his back, he had to fight against his body. He wanted this to last, but God, she was so warm and tight. He wanted this to take time but he couldn’t. He thrust into her, feeling her slickness, and she started to make small noises of pleasure.

Grabbing her, he shifted to pull her up. She was so light and willing that it felt so right to have her ride his cock. Gripping her back, he brought her upright. She thrust against him and every movement nearly made him see stars. He could feel her body tense and that sent him over the edge, the pressure in his lower half having settled deep long ago. He came with a shout and she inhaled, heavily, at the feeling. His entire body was singing when he held her against him. Naked, warm, and perfect. He came hard and felt everything else grey out. All he could feel was her.
He didn’t realize he was crying until she slowly pulled away to guide him down to the bed. She held him and he wept against her shoulder. He didn’t know why he was crying, but there were so many reasons to. He couldn’t let her die again. He couldn’t let another child die. He was being so selfish and now he’d made everything even worse.

“Kylo, it will be okay,” she soothed, rubbing small circles on his back. “We’re safe. I’m safe.”

He slowly regained control. “I’m…I’m sorry.”

She kissed his temple. “It’s okay. I’m going to get some water, okay?”

When she slipped off to the washroom, he tried to get his thoughts under control. They were safe, she was right. If he kept her alive, they would deal with the fallout tomorrow, because it had to end at some point.

She came back to the bed, holding a small paper cup of water for him. He gulped it down, slowly regaining control. She went to the other bed and turned down the covers, motioning for him to come over. He complied, too tired to talk or object.

Wrapped in her arms, he slept.

Groggily, he woke up to a knock on the door. The room was dark and he was too drowsy to comprehend what time it was.

“I’ll see who it is.” She mumbled, moving out of his arms. She’d somehow put on a t-shirt and her underwear again. Out of the bed, she pulled on a pair of pants—his pants—and moved to the door.

“Rey, no!”

The second she opened the door, it was already too late. The masked man forced open the safety lock, breaking it. She screamed, stunned by the sudden action. The stranger grabbed her before Kylo could do more than leave the bed.

The man held the gun to her head and met Kylo’s eyes.

“Did you think you could run and hide? Those aren’t the rules, Ben Solo.”

He heard the distinctive sound of the gun cocking and he could only look on in terror. She looked at him with panic, begging him to do something but there was nothing he could do.

The gunshot filled the small space and he screamed.

He dropped her, dead on the floor, took two long steps backward and ran.

Kylo’s hands were shaking as he fell to his knees beside her. Not again. Not again.

He blindly reached for his forgotten holster, on the floor beside the bed. He kept his eyes on her as he took his gun, put it in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

**Day 5**

And he woke up with a jolt. At home. Again, in his bed to his alarm at 5.59 a.m.
“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

His head ached, but his raw emotions were screaming at him. He smashed the radio. With a dull sob he picked it up and tossed it so hard on the ground that pieces of plastic flew up in the air. Not this shit again.

He grabbed his gun and everything seemed to happen in slow motion. The note was slipped under his door and he let his blind rage carry him there. He was a fraction of a second earlier than the first day so he caught the back of the paperboy down the hallway.

“Stop!” He yelled.

The man, Finn, turned to face him.

He fired blindly, wanting to kill someone, anyone at this point. He hit the other man twice but kept firing until the clip was empty. It wasn’t until he was standing over the body that he finally stopped shaking.

Leaning against the wall, he slid down to the floor. He put his head in his hands and wept.

It didn’t take long for the circus to arrive. There were so many voices and questions that it was easy to tune it out. He spent the rest of the day in a cell at the station—their station. He didn’t want to talk to anyone, especially her. He didn’t explain anything. He just felt numb to it all. The hours slipped by and he just wanted to disappear.

“Why won’t you talk to anyone?” Her soft voice asked. It was late in the evening now and Rey had finally come to see him.

He just shook his head, not looking at her. Faces echoed over faces. He didn’t need another one.

“Kylo, what’s happening? You’ve put your career on the line and the investigation is upside down. You have to talk to me.” She stood so close that he could catch the scent of her perfume. It made him ache all over.

“Can I tell you something?” He softly asked.

“Anything, yes.” She reached through the bars to brush his shoulder. He stiffened and moved away.

He wanted to tell her to leave town. He wanted to tell her to get away. But he remembered the promise that he made her. They couldn’t run. He would always find them, he slowly realized.

“It’s the same day for me,” he slowly whispered. “Rey, it’s the same day. I’ve been through today already and I don’t know how to make it to tomorrow. I’m…I’m pretty sure I’ve gone insane, but I need you to believe me. You have to stay alive. I can’t ask you to run and hide, but please, Rey, stay alive.”

She made a confused sound. He still couldn’t meet her eyes yet, but she took a slow step back.

“I…I don’t understand.”

Finally, he looked up at her. She stood there, outside the cell, looking tired and stressed but still beautiful and shining in the dull light. She was like a light that could guide him home.
“Kylo, you killed someone today. He was my friend,” she said, her voice low. “I don’t know what to believe at this point.”

“You need to believe me,” he replied, suddenly not wanting to take his eyes off of her. “Please, Rey.”

She bit her lip in thought, red spreading across her rose-toned lips, and then slowly nodded. “I want to believe you. They…they want me to take you to the interview room. They don’t want to keep you here.”

“As long as it’s only you,” he roughly said.

She nodded. “I’ll be right back.”

There were a few nervous minutes before she came back with a deputy who opened the cell door.

She led him down the hall to the interview room. No one would look at him and he didn’t really care. Yesterday had been too much. How did he find them? He hadn’t really thought about it thoroughly until it dawned on him that he’d booked the room under his real name and paid with his work credit card. Would it work to run again but not do that? But fuck he promised her that they wouldn’t run again. He had to keep that.

She opened the door to the interview room and he had to brush by her and it was all too close. He knew her body, but she didn’t know his. He felt tense as he sat down. She looked at him from the doorway and her mouth was set in a firm, tired line. He hated doing this to her.

There was a commotion down the hall and her head snapped to the side. The building jolted from the truck crashing into it and she was on guard, instantly wanting to figure out what was happening. “Wait here.”

“What, no!” And she closed the door. He lunged for the handle and jerked hard at it. He was trapped. He couldn’t protect her.

The dull, muffled sounds of gunshots filtered in through the closed door.

He just sat on the ground, his back against the door.

Couldn’t it just be over for today? He stared at the buzzing neon light in the ceiling and felt nothing but numb.

Mundi came to get him after an hour or maybe more. He didn't know. The other man looked ashen and tired. A fleck of blood was on his cheek.

“What’s going on, Ren?” He demanded, lowly. “What do you know about this?”

“Is she okay?” Kylo choked out, still on the floor.

Mundi looked at him harshly and then slowly shook his head.

“Is she okay?” He asked again, getting to his feet. “Is she fucking okay?”

Mundi, older than him by two decades, wiped at his eyes. “No she’s fucking not! The nutjob shot up the place! He crashed a truck into our front door and came after us. He was out after her! He had a fucking message for you to stop trying to hide from him. What the fuck does that mean? What do you know!”
“I don’t know anything!” Kylo shouted. “I don’t know why he’s after me and I don’t know why he’s after her! This is not my fault. I keep trying to protect her and it just keeps happening!”

Mundi’s mouth was a firm line of disappointment. “So you do know something.”

Kylo threw his hands in the air and shouted a string of profanities. “I haven’t figured it out yet! God dammit, Mundi, I need to see her!”

“She’s dead, Kylo. She’s dead, the captain’s dead. The only person that isn’t dead is you.” The other detective gave him a long and cold look. “Everything is so fucked here that we don’t know what to do with you. Go the fuck home. Go home and we’ll deal with you tomorrow.”

“There is no tomorrow!” He yelled back. “Why won’t anyone listen to me!”

Mundi looked at him with firm resolve. “Go home, Ren. Go home and try not to sound fucking crazy tomorrow.”

He left out the backdoor. Although part of him wanted desperately to see her, he also didn’t want to see where she died or how she died. He just wanted to go home, go to bed, and have it all start over again.

Day 6

With a shiver and a jolt, he awoke again when his alarm starting to chime at 5.59 a.m. The beeping washed over him and he just looked at the ceiling. It was another day. There was another chance. But did he want to take it?

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

There were too many thoughts in his head. He was too stubborn to give up. He wanted to keep fighting, but he just couldn’t deal with any of it. He rolled over, turned off his phone and spent the day in bed.

He ignored every sound, every knock and every shout from outside his door.

He didn’t eat. He wrapped his quilt around him and moved to his couch. He let it all just fade into noise.

It was when it got dark out that he dared to turn on his phone.

90 texts. 65 calls.

Most of them from Rey.

But the final text made his heart fall.

Your partner’s dead. Where are you? Answer your phone. It was from the captain.

He threw his phone across the room and it hit the wall with a dull crash. He pulled his quilt over his head and yearned for 2 a.m. to come.
Day 7

“IT’S TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 AT 6 A.M. GOOD MORNING FROM US AT NEW YORK NEWS 580. THE TEMPERATURE IS 74 AND PARTIALLY CLOUDY. FIRST, RETURNING TO TOP STORY OF THE MISSING CHILDREN…”

Another day spent hiding, in bed.

Another day with a text that told him she was dead.

He drank himself to sleep to bring on the start of another day.

Maybe the next today, he would feel like putting the pieces back together.

-=-

Chapter End Notes

Again, major character death, strong language, mentions of alcohol and sexual content. Thanks everyone for the comments and kudos. I promise that there will be lighter days ahead but right now, just feel sorry for our poor Kylo and Rey.
Days 8 and 9

Chapter Summary

Kylo finally realized that he has to work with Rey, despite his feelings. And he thinks that he finally has a suspect. See notes for warnings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 8

With a shiver and a jolt, he awoke again when his alarm starting to blare at 5.59 a.m. To his surprise, he felt oddly satisfied that he didn’t have a hangover, other than the emotional one that haunted every corner of his mind. So his body would just be tired. He could live to the point of nearly dying until 2 a.m. There were some sort of rules here that he had been avoiding. He stared at his hands and pondered spending the day in bed again. He couldn’t fight any of it; he hadn't really slept in weeks and now it had started to drag.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

He shut his eyes, listening to the envelope sliding under his door.

Slowly, his mind turned to his partner. His beautiful, competent, partner. What would Rey do if this were happening to her? First, she probably wouldn’t have seduced and slept with her partner if she knew that a killer was after children. He winced to himself. Second, she probably would have fully tested the time loop idea once more through the entire day, before desperately and impulsively flailing to find a quick solution. Instant gratification was one of his weaknesses. He was always the type to see the entire puzzle with only a few pieces and solve it; she was more detailed, and needed to be more methodical. Maybe they could work well together if he gave her a chance? He needed to think more like her to get them both out of this, especially her and the other victims. Reaching over to his bedside table, he grabbed a half-empty notebook and pen. He knew that the time loop would just reset everything but he had to start thinking more clinically about all of this. Write it down, repeat it, write it down again. He needed to reorganize his thoughts. This wasn't the type of person he really was, even at his deepest points. The pieces wouldn’t just fall into place because he wanted them to. He had to do actual police work in a situation that he wasn’t really trained for. His pen met the paper:

**Rule One: Don’t sleep with Rey.**

He eyed the rule and then added (*unless convenient.*) Biting his lip, he thought about crossing it out.

“I am terrible,” he mumbled to himself, but kept the rule.

**Rule Two: Don’t leave the city without a good reason or plan.**
Even though she would forget it, he had made her a promise that they wouldn’t run again, but there might be additional clues that he was missing. The city was where everything was happening but there was always a larger context. Think more like a cop than an idiot caught in an mental break. Thinking back to the night he tried to escape, he tried to reason about what had actually happened than what his body wanted to focus on. The killer had followed them; he must have put a trace on his work credit card and that meant that there might be a connection to the force, or had gotten into their system.

Rule Three: Connected to the Police?

The third point made him remember the first day of the loop, in the dark and seemingly empty parking lot. That strange man knew where his car was and when to strike. Who was on his suspect list? He needed to narrow it down and not run from it.

He stood and stretched, easing around his day (days?) old clothes. Okay. He had to test this theory the only way he knew: he had to get through the entire day and not avoid it.

The crash of the crow against the window reminded him that he was already late. He quickly called Rey and carefully picked up the envelope, eyeing it as she answered.

“Yeah, Niima?” Her breath was heavy and it reminded of her gasps as he thrust into her in a split second. Her tightness around his cock and the sweetness of her mouth. The rose petal shade of her delicate nipples, matching her hot and ready mouth. Dammit, Kylo, Rule One, he angrily shook out of the memory.

“Yeah, it’s Ren. I just got a letter from our perp...” he found himself repeating the same words from the first day and decided that to understand today, he needed to try slightly different things. “But he wasn’t the perp. I need you to come by my place, I’m calling it in.”

“What? He was there? Wait right there, what’s your address again?” She sounded more confused and paused. “How do you know he wasn’t the perp?”

He gave her the address and just told her to come over, not demanding but in the normal way that colleagues talked when the situation was acute. Or at least, how he thought that they talked. He’d have to explain it to her in private because if there was one thing that he needed to help him through the day; she needed to know about the loop. He needed her to find the clues too, the ones that he had missed before.

She still got there before the rest of the team, despite the fact that he was a few minutes late. Again, he had to try to ignore the way her chest was rising and falling as she tried to catch her breath. Sweat slightly glistened on her stomach and his eyes were drawn to the way she filled out her tight pants and the shape of her lower body, nearly showing off her delicate feminine angles; those were the parts he had tasted and filled and...

stop it. Rule One.

“What did the note say? Have you already called it in? Did you see him?” She asked, rapidly, again grabbing her bottle of water to take several deep drinks. He kept his face neutral but still had to blink hard at her saying the words again. Today had to be a test. He’d been too impulsive and he needed to figure this out. In order to do things different, he didn't need to change the actions, but his reactions to them. That was police training. This he could follow.

This time, he gently showed her the note. She took it, carefully handling the open envelope.

“I only caught his back,” he lied, but only to move things forward. “He looked like the guy selling papers downstairs.”
“Was it Finn? Why would he leave the note? I think I have his number so we can call him and see what he knows. But he can't be involved?” Her tone sounded like she was struggling against her own feelings about someone she knew outside of the police world; he should have known her contacts before all of this began, he thought with another deep wince. She didn't notice and only scanned the note as she continued to speak. “So the killer is threatening to take two kids today, that’s a change in pattern. Maybe we are finally getting close to him?”

Again, he wanted to snap that the change was also connected to making the case personal and about him and in only a way that he knew, about her. Instead he nodded, jerkingly. “There’s the additional fact that he came by my apartment, Rey. And he’s involved a civilian who knows me in some way; I think I believe you about the paper boy, but we still need to talk to him. But Rey, he’s targeting me, somehow, for some purpose that I can’t figure out. I’m not the only one hunting him. Neither are you. And I’m…worried that the team will be suspicious.”

She looked slightly confused by his careful tone, but nodded. “Kylo, what’s happening? You’ve never talked to me like this before. You must be really…afraid?”

She had no idea how fear gripped his every word and action, but he managed a simple shrug. The clock was ticking and he couldn’t tell her everything so he had to wing it. That was something to remember for the next today: be quicker to tell her. Rule Four.

“Look, the team will be here soon, so I can’t tell you what’s going on with...with me,” he gently reached out, tucking a stray hand behind her ear, suddenly realizing how close she was. He had to touch her, needing to remember again how she felt to make him grounded in the day. “But when they leave, we’ll have to go find the girl’s body. Or maybe they will. They’ll find it either way...But right now, I just need you to trust me.”

She had flinched, slightly, at the motion of his hand, but studied his eyes as his hand settled to cup the back of her neck. He felt her warm and slightly sweaty hairline and took in the way that she smelled: sweat and exertion. Roses and thrones. He slowly came back to the true moment when she spoke again. “You’re my partner...I have to trust you.”

The thundering of footsteps in his hallway made him slowly step away from her, nodding as he went. The same people, the same team, entered his open door: Tekka, Mundi, Muva, Dameron, Octavius. The captain looked at them with tired and tense eyes as they set to investigating the note, looking for forensics, and looking nervously at their watches. It was nearly 8 a.m.

“I saw who left the note, but I don’t think he was the killer,” he told the captain after being pulled to the side.

“What do you mean?” The older, dignified man asked. “We’ll have Dameron and his forensics team study this but we are...we are waiting for the report about the Windu child. Is this note about her? And what exactly did you see?”

Rey nodded. “He works down at the paper stand.”

Tekka studied her. “Were you here, Rey, when this happened?”

She quickly shook her head. “No, but he called me first and described whom he saw. I think I know who it is and I would like the chance to talk to him.”

The captain glanced over his shoulder and noticed the rather defeated look on Poe’s face as he looked over the initial evidence. There wasn’t much by the door or in the hallway. It was the same as every other scene so far.
“So this is a lead? The letter is about two children so we need to take our chances,” he rubbed a tired hand over his eyes, suddenly betraying how exhausted he was. Kylo had been so focused on his own issues that the strength and endurance of the team, Rey included, was often lost on him.

Maybe that should be another rule.

Kylo took a deep breath. “Look, we need to get changed. Can we meet you back at the station, to go over this and wait for news about the girl?”

The captain and Rey both looked slightly taken aback by his steady and determined tone that lacked his usual impulsive anger. Was he really that predictable?

With a brief nod, the captain checked his watch again. “We will probably know before you arrive. Be quick. And then we will deal with whatever comes next.”

And they were alone again, but this time her eyes were less nervous. She hadn’t switched out of her work-out clothes this time so that was already a change. Any change that he didn't directly cause was good. But there were still some things that he needed to alter.

“What’s happening, Kylo?” She asked, watching him move her bag again away from the door. He locked it again, just to be safe.

“Look, Rey, I’m going to tell you something that I still don’t believe is happening…” He guided her to sit on the sofa, not trusting the kitchen. “I know we can’t take too long, but this is important.”

There was a shuttered, silent moment between them. He looked at his hands, feeling her gaze growing stronger in the empty expanse.

“Who are you and what have you done with my partner?” She asked as he sat next to her.

“It’s been a long few days.” He ran a nervous hand through his hair. He had a feeling that this would always be the hard part. The hardest part would forever be her dying because he was too slow, too impulsive, or just because he was who he was: the son of a dead cop, who never got over being forgotten in the abyss of grief.

He took a deep, ragged breath before looking at her again.

“What if I were to tell you that I’ve already lived through today…,” he carefully tried to remember the words that had worked before, “Something like seven or eight times.”

Part of that was a lie. Part of that time he had spent hiding but now he needed clues. He started to hate himself for almost giving up so easily, but he partly felt relieved that whatever stupid thing he did, he’d still wake up. But another area of his mind pressed on him: would this last forever?

She started to speak again and he was drawn back into where he needed to be. Remember. Remember what she said.

“I’d say that…”

“There is only one today Kylo…and you drink too much.” He matched her again, almost word for word. She reached out to grip his leg in surprise.

“Lucky guess?”
He only shook his head solemnly this time.

“So…So tell me what happens. Today.”

This time he managed a small smile at how good it felt to have her believe him.

“Look, I know they are going to find the girl soon and this is going to take time…but I need your help today.” He met her eyes. “You have to help me find the things I’ve been missing.”

After a deep breath, she nodded and he slowly started to tell her about the days. They had felt so long and so hard, but it almost felt easier when he explained them, despite how he felt at his own reaction. They ignored the vigorous vibrating of their phones, calling them to duty, because this part had to be established. He had met her eyes and they had both ignored the messages. This was his release about the evidence. But a part of him just wanted to talk to someone about what he’d done, what happened, and how it felt every brutal time. He told her about all the times that she died, and how he had also died. How they had ran and still were followed. How he had been a coward and hid the last few days. The only thing that he left out was what happened in the hotel room, but now she had heard it all. To a point.

He finally got to the previous day. She looked both shocked, saddened and another emotion he couldn't really read. It hadn’t taken that long, maybe only 15 minutes, but it still felt like hours.

She looked at him, long and hard. “You’ve made this more about me than the case.”

Her voice had hardly been a whisper. And his head sagged at the accusation.

“I thought…I thought it would stop the loop.”

“Solving the case will solve the loop.” She quickly shook her head, standing. “We’ve already wasted enough time. For once, Kylo Ren, I am going to try to get you to listen to me.”

He nodded, willing to try anything. “Tell me what to Rey, everything I’ve done has been wrong.”

She tapped him on the shoulder, urging him up. “Get changed, we don’t have time for anything else but we can’t look like…this.”

Shaking his head in agreement, he turned to leave the room. Over his shoulder he caught a glimpse of her pulling off her sports bra and moving to dig through her bag. Rule One was not looking like it was going to work, especially with the way she seemed determined to take charge without caring about what he saw or didn’t see. This was his time loop, what did she think that she could actually change?

After changing and doing the bare minimum he could without a shower—shaving, too much deodorant and cologne—he met her back in his living room. Her hair was pulled back in a tight ponytail and she had sprayed on perfume but she didn’t look happy to be unshowered. But he guessed that she was also unhappy about the entire situation. She was almost glaring at him by the time he met her eyes.

“I’m so disappointed in you.” She frowned, gesturing for him to move to the door to leave. Her tone wasn't one that he had really heard before.

He gaped at her and she had to grab him by the arm to lead him out.

“What do you mean?”
She rolled her eyes, talking as she stomped down the hallway. “Kylo, come on. I got a promotion and I heard I would be partnered with you. I heard about how smart and how single-minded you are…and then you spent over a month ignoring or being rude to me. Did you think you could solve this yourself? Like you tried to do during our entire partnership? I know I said I trust you and I do, but don’t make this about me—include me.”

Finally, they were in the elevator of his apartment, heading down to the garage. He met her strong eyes and finally understood why she had gotten to be detective before she was 30. She had held this back from him.

_Fuck Rule One._

He was moving before he could really think. The way that she talked, the way that she commanded him, it was all too much. With his bigger, stronger form, he closed the small distance between them in the elevator and forced her mouth against hers, just wanting to feel her angry passion against him again. He intensely kissed her again, amazed by her and the fact that he’d missed all of it before.

In shock, she briefly responded, gripping at his hair and gasping, before violently pushing him back, elbowing him hard in the shoulder.

“God, Kylo, _not now_!” She looked at him with angry eyes, before they narrowed in suspicion. “Have _you_ ever done that before?”

The elevator dinged. They were at the garage. And he just stood at the other side of the elevator car, not really responding.

“Kylo,” she closed her eyes and shook her head. “You are utterly unbelievable.”

She stalked out of the elevator and he sheepishly followed.

“I’m…I’m sorry.”

He followed her swishing ponytail until they reached his car. She hadn’t really answered, until she had to turn. “Apparently you have to drive, otherwise we’ll die.”

Her final word echoed in the hollow concrete expanse. He met her eyes, trying not to react. He hated backing down from anything but she was right, despite her bitter tone.

“Just tell me one thing before we focus on the case, Ren,” she swiftly moved to the passenger door. “How many times have we slept together?”

He looked down to retrieve his keys from his pocket, thankful for the break in eye contact. “Once.”

She groaned at his mumbled response. “Let’s just go.”

Once on the road, they got the call about the boy. He realized that they needed to see those clues rather than the ones that led them nowhere—trying to stop him, the killer, was a dead end. They quickly started the drive to Staten Island and he took a different route, bypassing the intersection where he thought that the truck would be.

She let out a slow shaky breath. “Was it good?”

“What?”
Paused at a red light, he cast a quick glance at her before swiftly sweeping the intersection for the truck. He wasn’t going to get distracted with her being this determined.

“When we…when we had sex? Was it good?”

Now who was getting side tracked? But really, they had nothing else to think about at that point. She hadn’t seen the clues and had only heard him describe the day.

He nodded. “Yeah. It was…it was really…you were…Rey you were fantastic.”

His hands got tighter on the wheel, forcing himself to pay attention to everything that was happening outside of the car.

She slowly exhaled. “I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. Or think you do. Or whatever is happening.”

“Rey…” the light turned green and he slowly rolled into the intersection and thankfully there was no truck here. He’d have to deal with that part later. Maybe the next today. “You…you wanted me too. I don’t think I forced you. I’d never do that.”

“I know you wouldn’t.”

They finally rolled up to the boy’s apartment building after minutes of awkward silence.

“Tell me what to do the next time you ask me that question,” he turned off the car. “So we can avoid this again to focus on the case. It’s like you said, the case first. Cops first. I need you to help me make…make things make sense.”

She finally looked at him again. Her eyes were slightly red and her mouth was set in a firm line.

“Kylo, the reason I believed that something was happening to you was the way you talked to me. You haven’t really looked at me like a person until now. I’m…I guess that I’m angry that you just gave up on the case because it became more about my death,” she paused, the thought suddenly dawning on her. “But me dying is part of the case.”

He shook his head in agreement. “That’s it, Rey. That’s exactly it. He says that he is giving me a choice but he isn’t.”

She pulled out her notebook and started jotting down a quick note. She frantically scratched some notes on the piece of paper and ripped it out, slamming it down on the dashboard.

Rey dies before midnight.

She met his eyes. “That’s our deadline, Kylo. Like you said.”

He noticed other cops starting to eye their car. He wanted to correct her and say that 2 a.m. was technically the deadline but didn’t have the time. And the fact that the day could end at anytime when they died also lurked in the back of his mind. Pushing it all aside, he nodded, moving to exit the car. She only paused slightly outside, resting her hands on the roof.

“Look, about the sex part,” she spoke quickly, like she was embarrassed, red coloring her unshowered and tired cheeks. “…If I ask you about it again, just tell me it was something beautiful. And that you actually cared about me. But if it happens again…I…I like being on top.”

And she turned and stalked away from the car without looking at him again.
He followed her numbly, not knowing what to say. Maybe next time he should tell her about the rules? Rule One was fairly important, right? Fuck, fuck the case. Her dress pants fit her ass tightly and he had to look away as he trailed after her up the steps to the building. *The boy, the boy, the case: Rey dies before midnight.*

They were back meeting the panicked mother and this time he actually took in the entire apartment. Single mother, clearly. Rey had turned her intense concentration to her. Instead of lurking and being angry and tired, he opened his eyes and took in more of the place this time. They were on the ground floor, close to the main door. He could understand why she thought he’d be safe — there was another door between them and the world. There were coupons stuck to the fridge with the deadlines underlined in angry red pen and a pile of unopened mail on the kitchen table, many of them stamped with bank logos. Financial troubles. Okay, tomorrow (today again? What was he calling it?) there would be another rule: *Boy’s mom in trouble.*

Why hadn’t he seen this before?

Muva again, came up, flipping through his notebook. Except it was in a different room. “It’s a little boy. Elias D. Antonio.” He handed him the school picture.

It was the same dark-haired, eight-year-old boy in the picture. Missing teeth, orange sweater. Rey was across the space, taking notes even more focused this time. She really did believe him.

He heard Muva licking his lips. “She was in the kitchen and he was putting on his shoes by the front door. She thought that he would be fine if he was in the house, so she went to put some clothes to dry before taking him to school. Front door was wide open when she got back.”

He slowly thought about the phrase again. “Did he know how to open the front door to the building?”

Muva nodded at the question. “Didn’t think to ask that. Kylo, there was another note here so we were kind of distracted.”

“Stop being distracted,” he said, catching her eyes across the apartment’s expanse. There were too many complications right now. He shook his head, remembering that he was the only one that knew the key moments of the day, although he didn't really understand them. “What did it say?”

He knew the answer and nearly mirrored Muva’s response: “Tick tock, Solo.”

Nodding, Kylo moved across the room to where Rey and the mother sat. He met his partner’s eyes and nodded. She looked at him with intensity at his intrusion but then remembered the rest of the day.

“I’m sorry, Miss Dameron, we really need to go,” she gripped the woman’s hand. “The other officer will take care of you.”

*Dameron. The D was for Dameron.*

He thought back to the moment in the picture room on the first day. The flashes of the forensic investigator's eyes. The way that he had looked at the picture and spoke to Rey. He had the connections through the police and knew the system and the station. Was this his son? What was the relation here? His mind started to race and he needed Rey to start moving. He had a clue and needed to jump to the next one. The homeless man was the next part and he needed her to be there with him.

“Rey, Rey, we need to go,” he suddenly demanded. Her head snapped up in warning but she
reluctantly started to rise. He filed away the Dameron information alongside the paperboy. They still hadn’t tracked that lead down, since he had apparently missed the rest of work that morning, as they’d heard from the others by text on the ride over. Under his breath, he motioned towards the door. “We need to catch the homeless man.”

“Slow down,” she muttered, following him down to the car. “Talk to me. You already said…”

He met her eyes and he knew that they were wild. She dared him with her look and shook her head.

“Slow, together.” She hissed, when they reached the car.

“Yes…I...We’ll get the homeless man and then I’ll tell you, we could have already missed him. Rey, I’m here now,” he told her, firmly.

Her eyes seemed to flare with his as she nodded and ducked into the passenger side. He was pulling her along with him again and he couldn’t slow down, even though he knew better. The key moments seemed to shine brighter now that she was with him. They drove and he almost gasped. At the same point, at the same damned place, his car slowed when the trashman started his trek across the street to purposely slow them down. He looked at her and she both appeared surprised that he was right but also seemed to accept his reasoning: if they get him at that point, then maybe there wouldn’t be the incident at the station.

He stopped the car and they exited at the same time. With her cool, British accent she called to the man. Out of the corner his eye, he saw her note from earlier fall to the ground but he pushed the thought away at the sound of her voice.

“Hey, where are you going?”

The stranger, with his scarred skin and thin hair, turned to slightly laugh at her. “Our mutual friend needs me. Don’t you know?”

“Who are you?” Kylo demanded. Cars were stopping around their parked vehicle and confrontation. They were blocking two lanes of traffic and vehicles were creeping around them. The man and his cart, and the red t-shirt, were something that he needed to add to the list. Did Dameron have something to do with this? “Do you know Poe Dameron?!!”

Rey’s head snapped towards him as they closed in on the man. She held back her objection to keep a seemingly united front, inching closer.

The man, and his broken teeth, started to cackle. It started deep and then broke into a full, high-pitched laughter. “So, so, many clues. You still don’t know anything!”

His sudden shout caused them both to stop circling him. He tossed down his cart and he panicked at the loss of evidence. In his moment of anxiety, he missed the man pulling off his jacket. Bomb vest. The trashman was wired. *Shit.* Rey, Rey, Rey. They were too close. She was nearly within an arm’s reach—they both were.

“See you tomorrow.”

And then his ears exploded. And his body was struck by sharp, hot, angry projectiles. Pain, white pain. He couldn’t hear anything, but he could feel the ground. He felt the pavement and tasted blood in his mouth. His sight started to focus again in the haze of his ringing ears and he saw her only a few feet away. She had been closer. She was already gone.

He slowly crawled over to grab her hand.
“You’ll never die alone,” he murmured, feeling the life drain from his body.

But dying this time didn’t feel that bad. He had clues. He had a start. It was closer than he’d felt in so long.

Day 9

His usual shiver and jolt woke him. But this time it was at 5.58. The alarm hadn’t started to blare. His heart started to beat furiously in his ears—not just from dying but from the fact that something changed. He lingered in the annoying sound of his alarm for the extra minute and just basked in it before the radio clicked on.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

Working together, they still ended up dead but something, anything had changed.

He almost giddily jogged up to the door to greet the paperboy, prepared to slip the note under his door.

“Good morning Finn!” He said, swinging the door open. “Why don’t you come in and tell me everything you know while we wait for Rey?”

The young man, frozen by his greeting, just gaped at him. “I um, I ughh…”

He rolled his eyes. “I haven’t figured out if you are the killer yet, but $50 is pretty good, right?”

The other man looked like he was about to bolt so Kylo reached out to grab his shirt with a strong hand. “Look, just come inside. We have the time.”

He knew that they would have time the second that he could call her.

This couldn't go on forever if they could figure it out together.

Chapter End Notes

So again, character death warnings. References sexual content. Other than that, again, thanks SO MUCH for the comments and kudos. The term is starting soon so I'm about to get swamped by students and post-doc research. Plus, my mum is in hospital and we don't live in the same country (aka I'm not sleeping at all). I wanted this chapter to be longer because we have many, many more days to get through but this seemed to end a good point? Again, I'm always cleaning up typos and errors so if you notice something, let me know.
Btw, if you want something less intense/violent/death, I have my angsty figure skating A/U. If I can't find what I like, I guess I will just write it!
Days 9–11

Chapter Summary

Kylo and Rey try to find their key suspect, after taking a break for half a day in which Kylo realizes some things. But then everything turns on them when they realize they've been chasing the wrong clues. See tags/notes for warnings!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 9, cont.

Well, Kylo had the paperboy. But what was he going to do with him? He contemplated cuffing him but instead made him sit on his sofa. The man, Finn, folded his arms and was slightly glaring at him as he called Rey. It still bothered him that she knew him somehow, fighting against a tinge of jealousy. He promptly called the team after, then turned back to his captive.

“Stay here,” he needed to get his notebook before some of the details falled from his memory. “If you leave, I will shoot you. I’ve done it before.”

“What are you talking about?”

He rolled his eyes and swiftly went to his bedroom for the now-empty pad of paper. He sat across from Finn and started righting out the rules, adding a new column: suspect list. A harsh line divided the page with a slightly aggressive pen stroke.

Rules One, Two and Three, followed by the new Rule Four of telling her as quickly as he could. Rule Five was to be aware of the team. Rule Six, about the boy’s mother’s apparent troubles.

He was tapping Dameron’s name, roughly written under his suspect list. Was rule seven going to be about the bum’s vest? Was that a rule? That part could be solved or the connections worked out. He didn’t have it later in the day both when he confronted him and when he was brought into the station. He was part of the loop, like the truck.

“Okay, what are you writing?” Finn was slumped down on his couch, his leg bouncing.

“It’s a list of r-…” he paused. “It’s none of your business.”

Rey’s knock on the doorjamb thankfully interrupted whatever next question the other man had. He’d left the door open. She entered the living room and eyed them both.

“Finn, what are you doing here?” She asked, dropping her bag. Same spot. Always the same spot.

“Tell her what you know,” Kylo narrowed his eyes. “Tell her so that we both hear it before the others arrive.”

“Look, Rey and…whoever you are, detective man, some dude in black gave me $50 to slip a note
under your door and run. He was just this white dude. Black hood, didn’t show me his face. He
talked funny.”

Rey sat down across from him on the couch while Kylo stood by, his arms folded. She’d retrieved
her notebook from her bag and was quickly making notes about what Finn was saying. She could
get details from him that he probably wouldn’t reveal to the team.

“Why did you agree to do that?” She asked, rapidly. “Did he tell you what the note said?”

Kylo retrieved the note from the floor and carefully opened it, pretending not to listen. He would at
least have to pretend he didn’t have the words memorized.

“Nah, just that the detective had to get it at this time,” he sheepishly looked down at his gloved
hands. “I really needed the money.”

Once the rest of the crew arrived, it was the same set of steps: the same people and the same
questions about the note and how and why he might be involved. Like the previous day, he
responded firmly but without anger or annoyance. He eyed Dameron and thought about
confronting him there, but realized it would call too much attention to it without having the
necessary reason of the boy. At his careful answers, Rey again looked at him with surprise and the
captain looked slightly less tense. Kylo needed to get them on his side with his attitude, especially
Rey.

They were earlier today but he knew that the clock was starting to run down. Soon it would be able
the girl’s body and the boy’s disappearance. The captain again gave him careful parting words to
get ready and head down. Rey again, stayed with him, her arms behind her head as she sat on the
couch. He was making coffee, his back to her.

“What’s this?”

Shit, he’d left the list on the table.

He tensed, not able to face her. Okay, he had to explain things to her. Maybe the list could be a
help? He tried to stop his hand from shaking as he handed her a mug. Sitting down across from her,
he took a deep breath.

“Rey, I know I haven’t been the best partner and this case is something else,” he met her eyes and
she was lightly nodding along, her hand still touching his notebook. “But there’s something
happening to me that I can’t explain, but you need to know about. This is, what, the ninth time I’ve
woken up and it’s been today. The same day. Maybe it’s a dream, or maybe I’m insane, but I can’t
figure it out and solve this case without you.”

She slid the notebook across the table to him. “So not sleeping with me unless it’s convenient is
part of solving the case?”

“Yes, actually,” he quickly replied. Maybe a little too quickly. He winced and then continued. “But
it was only once. And that day didn’t end…well. So that’s why it’s a rule.”

“It’s a good rule, then,” she bit her lip. She was eyeing the rest of the rules, but carefully regarding
his posture at the same time.

He contemplated his options. The previous today, he’d been thoroughly engaged by her aggression
and determination. He let her take charge but still was slightly impulsive. They were uneven
partners that day so he needed to put them on the same level. He had to avoid telling her about how
he had nearly given up, but emphasize her death as being important and part of it.
“I’m sorry that I know things about you that you don’t know. But it was something we both wanted at the time, Rey, and it was something beautiful,” he kept his focus on her, remembering her earlier words. “And I obviously need a rule because I want to again.”

Her eyes widened briefly and self-consciously crossed her arms across her body. She shook her head and sighed heavily. “Well, as long as you follow rules, we should be fine.”

“So you trust me?” He blinked. “About how it’s the same day?”

“You’re my partner…I have to trust you.”

He took a quick drink of coffee. “Good, we don’t have time to shower, but we can change and get going. Yeah, I don’t like it either. We should hear about the girl soon and then we’ll try to keep ahead of him before he takes the boy. There’s something there that we need to look more into. Somehow the forensics guy, Dameron, is involved. He’s related to the boy and didn’t tell us before.”

Nodding, she stood. “So Rule Three?”

“Yeah,” he gave her a small smile, pleased at how quickly she caught on. “Get changed. I’ll tell you more in the car.”

She didn’t look as engaged as before but gave him a firm nod in response. Again, he knew it wasn’t fair for her not to have showered but he was still too slow at this part. They’d get the call about the girl in the car, he realized, and that would be a good interruption if she cornered him with questions.

Changed and in the elevator, he tried to read her face. She looked like she was still processing what was going on.

“So…So tell me what happens. Today.”

“I’ve really only made it through the entire day once,” he admitted. “I’ve made some stupid decisions other days…”

“Like sleeping with me?”

“That was just…poorly timed.”

The elevator dinged, reaching the garage. She snorted lightly at him. They were quiet until he was about to pull the car out onto the street.

“I don’t know why I believe you, but I do. You haven’t really looked at me like a person until now,” she shook her head, after checking her phone. Still no news. “I didn’t know you thought I was attractive.”

So that was it. He quickly pulled the car over and reached out to take her hand.

“Is it still okay that I told you?” He rubbed a small circle with his thumb. She seemed to be slightly amazed at the touch, like he wasn’t capable of softness. Maybe he wasn’t before today.

“I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. Or think you do. Or whatever is happening,” her tone was softer than the previous time. She studied his hand and the way that he was looking at her. “What else happens today, Kylo? What aren’t you telling me?”
“You die, Rey,” he said, softly. “Every day, you die. Sometimes I die too, but then the day just
starts over again. The first day, you made it to midnight. I…I haven’t been able to keep you alive
longer the other days. I know this sounds insane and crazy, but I care about you. We need to work
together as partners to figure out who is taking the children, why he is after me, and why he’s also
after you. You have to help me find the things I’ve been missing.”

She was quiet and he carefully pulled her hand to his lips, leaving a light kiss on her soft skin. He
hoped he hadn’t crossed another line.

Slowly, she nodded. “I think I understand. Solving the case will solve the loop, it has to. Let’s get
going. I think we’ve wasted enough time.”

He gently squeezed. “We’ll be cops in a minute. I just need to know you’re okay and that we’re
partners on this. *Equal* partners.”

She leaned over, placing a small kiss at the corner of his mouth. “I’m okay, partner. Let’s go. We’ll
do this together.”

She shifted away, a small smile on her face. He nodded and started the car again. Rey’s phone rang
and they got the news about the girl. That meant they only had to wait to hear about the boy. An
idea dawned on him.

“We need to find Dameron and talk to him,” he said. “How well do you know him?”

She agreed with a nod but shrugged. “Just as colleagues. We’ve been to some after-works at the
same time. He seems like he’s good at this job, I’ve never heard anyone having a problem with
him but he can be a bit cocky sometimes. Did you say he’s related to the boy?”

He nodded. “Yesterday, or whatever, the mother’s last name was Dameron. I got…we got a bit
ahead of ourselves and I couldn’t really figure out how.”

She raised an eyebrow.

He grimaced. “There’s this homeless man. We got him to the station on the first day and he *knows*
something. He said yesterday that he’d see me tomorrow and that wasn’t really possible since
we…since we died.”

“How?”

“Bomb,” he said, bluntly. “He blew himself up too.”

She was silent until they neared the station.

“How many ways have I died?”

Pulling up, he parked in a different spot than the first day. Shit, she still had forgot her bag, he
realized, not seeing it in the car. But he changed where the car was parked so that was different. It
was closer to the entrance they would have to use if the truck hit again. Turning off the car, he
studied his keys rather than her. He had to remember them if they made it through the day this
time.

“Stabbed a couple times, shot too, car accident, and now the bomb,” he slowly looked up at her.
“The first time was actually to save the boy. He says he’s giving me—*us*—a choice but he isn’t
really.”
“Was I afraid?”

How to answer that?

“I…when I’m with you…I don’t let you die alone, and I don’t want you to die alone or die at all,” he quickly left the car, ignoring her light inhale. She had to jog a few steps to catch up with him. He checked his watch—they must be giving the press conference now.

“Hey, wait,” she gently grabbed his arm to pull him aside. The station was bustling and it reminded him of the last time he’d been there. He’d left after hearing she’d died there, shot dead doing her job. That day he had let her die alone. He winced at the memory and her face grew more concerned.

“Hey, we’re going to get him together.” She said firmly, gripping his arm. “Let’s get to work.”

He nodded. If this morning was anything, working together helped change something. “Let’s go find Dameron.”

The lab was on the other side of the building. He usually waited for them to bring the results to him so he didn’t really know the area all that well. He again had to tamp down his pride at her being able to turn on her confidence. She obviously was more willing to work with the other parts of their world than he was. Again, she was a good partner. He had only realized it a little too late.

Finding the room she was looking for, she popped her head in. He lurked in the hallway, trying to remember the way there in case he needed to be there again. He had a feeling that he would. She caught up with Dameron’s assistant, gazing into a microscope in one of the smaller labs, the one with the strange name. “Hey, where’s Poe?”

The woman looked up and shrugged. “He said he had an errand. You guys are working him and us too hard; we’re doing our best. He should be back soon. Oh, he forgot his phone and it’s been ringing all the time so if you find him, tell him how annoyed I am.”

“Does he have a kid?” Rey asked. “A little boy?”

She shrugged again. “I don’t think so.”

Kylo clenched his hand into a fist and felt his lead slipping away. Rey turned to look at him and seemed to be working through the problem. If he wasn’t there, maybe he did take the boy?

“But he’s got a nephew in Staten Island. Elias, I think.”

Their heads snapped back towards the lab tech. Sighing, she rose from her seat to a small desk across the room to pick up a framed picture. Kylo’s hands were nearly shaking when she handed him the same picture that he’d seen on the other todays.

“Thanks,” he quickly handed it back. “Rey, let’s go. We know the connection. Now we need to find him.”

She nodded, thanked the tech and followed his long strides back towards the area that held their desks. He wanted to go directly out to Staten Island but that meant the truck, the homeless man, and the rest of the day. Maybe it was worth changing cars again?

“Does Dameron know your friend Maz?” He asked.

Rey looked confused at first and then shook her head. “I don’t think so. But I’ve never mentioned
her to you…”

“I told you. It’s the same day.” They stopped at their desks and he clenched his hands into fists. “We took her car one time. It um, it didn’t work. That’s the car accident time that you and I…”

“Yeah, okay.” She was pacing slightly, thinking again.

“Where have you two been?” Mundi demanded, clearly returning from the press conference to take his spot at the tip line. The other members of the team trailed behind him. The captain gazed at them from across the office, slightly shaking his head.

“Chasing a lead,” he answered. The tip line phone started to ring and Kylo met Rey’s eyes and nodded.

They were already leaving the room when Mundi called out that he’s got another one. He exchanged a nod with the captain as they were heading out to the parking lot.

“Maybe tomorrow we’ll take her car,” he mumbled as they reached his.

“You say that like we’re not going to catch him this time.” She climbed in beside him. “Or is today a test run?”

He swallowed the thought. “You mean we don’t go to Staten Island and try another way?”

Rey gave him a small nod. “It hasn’t worked going there before.” She reached into her pocket and wrote the same words on the sheet of paper. This time, she gently placed it on the dashboard.

Rey dies before midnight.

“That’s our deadline, Kylo. Like you said,” she nudged it lightly towards him, “Let’s gather clues and make it to midnight and see what happens. I believe you, Kylo. Maybe we…maybe we don’t choose the boy today. I don’t like the idea but if we can break the loop, then we’ll know who he is before tomorrow.”

“I’d really, really like there to be a tomorrow at this point.” He took a deep and then let out long sigh, cleansing his lungs might help sort out his mind. “You know what, let’s do it. We have the lead with Dameron. And your friend Finn. Now we just need to find the trashman. Before he finds us.”

She gave him a small but confident grin. Grabbing his hand, she lightly squeezed it.

They drove to where he remembered meeting the homeless man for the first time. They’d have to park nearby and try to find him. He was trying to find a spot while also ignoring the growing need to be closer to her. She wasn’t overly confident and demanding today in that good way that she was before. Today, she was thinking on her feet and trying to reason with the paradox that they were in.

“What happens if we leave the city? Rule Two?” She asked, prodding gently.

“He finds us.” Solemnly, he turned off the car. “I was an idiot and paid with the shop’s credit card. That’s when I figured out that he must be somehow connected to our system. I mean, Dameron has that information. Or maybe he knows someone that watches the tolls. I can’t figure out how he followed us but it didn’t feel good to run. You…you made me promise that we wouldn’t run again.”

She shook her head and then firmed her mouth into a resolute line. “Okay, yeah. So, first, the
homeless man. Then, back to the station and find Dameron? Maybe talk to Finn?”

“Cops first,” he repeated the dead words from a previous today. “He’s got the bomb this time, but not later on. He followed us, or someone told him where we would be. How do we get around that?”

He felt slight panic start to rise. Maybe they had made another impulsive decision?

She frowned. “I’ve been thinking about that. What if we followed him? He must meet with whoever gave him the vest to give it back?”

“That’s really the only option we have.” He started scanning the street, trying to remember the time that he had seen the man the first day. Across the street, in the distance, he got a glimpse of the man, shuffling in their direction. “There!”

He was practically holding his breath. The man rolled his cart to cross the street, exactly like he did the first day. Kylo spotted the red t-shirt in the cart as the man lingered in the middle of the road, down the block. He was looking for them, but hadn’t noticed the car.

“What’s he waiting for?” Rey whispered. “Is he waiting for us to come back from Staten?”

“He must not be in the loop,” Kylo hissed. “He only knows what we’ve done before. He’s not following us, just being where we are supposed to be.”

Rey shook her head in confusion. “This makes my head hurt.”

Eventually, another car rolled up and honked at the homeless man. He glared at the car and shook his head, shuffling back in the direction that he came. They’d changed this part of the loop for him. Where would he go now?

He slowly started the car and they pulled out, keeping a good distance from the man. Rey bit her lip and gripped her seatbelt.

“We should go on foot, we’re going to catch up to him soon.”

Kylo again was worried about being reckless. The man had stopped ahead, rummaging through a trashcan. He pulled over and double parked outside of a café. He squinted. The man slowly removed his jacket and the vest, dumping it into the can. Then he kept going. Now they had their chance.

“Let’s go.” He left the car and she quickly followed. He didn’t really care about dumping the car. They had to get to him.

“Hey!” He called when they were within earshot. The street was filled with people but he could only focus on the strange, homeless, burnt man.

The man turned, his eyes wide. “Our mutual friend didn’t say that we’d meet now.”

He grabbed the man and forced him against the wall of an alleyway. They needed to be somewhere more private with fewer sightlines. “Who is our mutual friend? How does he know about the time loop? Where is the boy?”

Rey had drawn her gun, pointing it at him with fierceness. Kylo kept him against the wall, feeling anger spread through his chest when he saw how the man was looking at her.
"You're starting to follow the clues." He swept his eyes back to Kylo. "That's all he wants."

Kylo pressed harder on his chest. "Who are you?"

"Snoke," he murmured. "Call me Snoke, Ben Solo."

He shook his head. "I don't know you. How do you know me? Who's our mutual friend?"

"He told me about you." The strange man grinned, resembling a skull with its skin drawn too tight. "What you will be doing. Where you will be. Every day."

"Not this time," Rey snapped. "We're changing it."

"Foolish child, you're changing nothing," he started to laugh again and Kylo felt his rage nearly become uncontrollable. "It will keep happening until he gets his answer."

Kylo had to let go, or else he would strangle the man. "Why the children? What do they have to do with this?"

"You'll see," the man hissed before hunching over. Kylo instantly pulled his gun and stepped between the man and Rey, shielding her. "He will break you."

Instead of a weapon, the man brought up a small vial and downed the contents. His mouth slowly started to froth as they stood by, shocked by his words and his actions. He slumped against the wall, chuckling.

"See you tomorrow…" he gurgled, slumping against the wall.

Rey was the first one to move, nudging him first with her foot and then checking for a pulse. She looked up shaking her head. "Do we leave him?"

"Yeah, I think so. Let's go back to the car and we'll call someone to deal with him and the vest."

He waved his hand towards the scene, just wanting to get away.

Rey was on the phone, explaining both why they weren't at the other crime scene, and the situation with the homeless man. He was brooding over his taunts when they were back at the vehicle. This was a new part. Despite what the man said, they had changed the path. He didn't know where to go now. To Staten Island to talk to the mother? To the station to find the captain and Dameron? Did he dare drive? Where was the truck? He felt his breathing get quicker.

"Kylo, Kylo, it's okay." She shook his hand, stilled on the steering wheel. "What's wrong?"

"I don't know what to do. This has never happened before." He met her eyes and frowned.

She studied him before nodding. "Okay. So what would happen if we had taken him in?"

He thought back to the first day, telling her the events. Meeting the trashman on the street, going back to the station, her making them go find lunch, then meeting the man again. Arguing with her back at the station. The way Palpatine was lurking around. Then the truck hitting the building and the man escaping. The events felt a little unclear — unlike the earlier parts of the day, he'd only been there once. The moment he remembered the sharpest was forgetting his keys: that caused her to die.

Her brow was furrowed as she thought about what he had told her.

"But I passed out at 2 a.m. and then I woke up and it was the same day. It's always the twenty-
fourth.” He shrugged. “Right now, we’re ahead of the clock.”

He heard the approaching sirens—both the team and the bomb squad, he guessed—and knew that the rest of the conversation would have to wait. They left the car, approaching the scene. He saw flashes of the determined Rey from the other day when she worked with the rest of the team. She saw his panic and was trying to balance out their team; he was still annoyed at himself that he again hadn’t noticed before that she obviously did. He was leaning against the wall, observing the coroner’s personnel look over the homeless man. Again, he tried to untangle the words. Was the homeless man the killer? No, but he was being manipulated by him. He was about the right height to match the strange man that had attacked them. Was that another pawn? Would that stop how this day was doomed to end?

Closing his eyes, he felt exhaustion roll over him. They hadn’t really eaten all day and he had no idea how many hours of sleep he’d actually had.

A gentle hand touched his elbow and he jumped.

“They’re taking his cart in to check out the shirt and the rest of his belongings,” Rey said, taking a step back and looking a bit embarrassed that she’d frightened him. “The captain was a bit mad that we didn’t go to Staten but he said that this lead is better than what they found. Maybe we can get an ID on him.”

He shook his head. “He didn’t have ID on him. There’s nothing there. It’s a dead end.”

“But we’ve changed it, Kylo.” Rey looked hopeful. “If he’s not in the station, then the crash won’t happen. If the crash doesn’t happen, we won’t have to leave through the other door.”

He rubbed his eyes. “Yeah, that has to work.”

He felt unsteady on his feet and she frowned. “You need to eat something. And rest.”

“So do you.”

Their eyes met in mutual fatigue. He was more tired from suddenly being in a new situation and that should exhilarate him at that point. He still wished he had got more answers out of the homeless man.

“I’ll be right back,” she said, quietly, and turned away from him to make a phone call.

He stood by, still processing what could happen next because what should happen next wasn’t going to.

“Dameron’s still not back.” She returned from the short distance that she had put between them. “And the captain says that we need to take the afternoon off. He’ll pull in two others.”

“But this is our case, Rey,” he spoke with more annoyance than anger. “Rule Two is that we don’t run. I just wish that bastard hadn’t killed himself — he can lead us to whoever is behind all of this. Have they gotten anything out of your friend?”

“Not yet.” Rey looked over her shoulder at the body, now under a white sheet and ran her tongue over her teeth. “Well, why don’t we try again tomorrow?”

He glared at her. “You know that there isn’t one if we don’t catch him.”

“That’s not what I meant.” She rolled her eyes, letting the pause stretch out as his hands started to
twitch from frustration. “We go home, we discuss the days you’ve had. We make an evidence wall of all the days and figure out the connections. You’ve already got your list. We expand on it together and start putting the pieces back together.”

“We can’t got to my place,” he replied, reluctantly. “He knows where I live. He probably knows where you live too. And he can follow us out of the city. Today started so well and now I’m just... stuck.”

They finally were loading up the body and the rest of the team was starting to clear out. Another rule would have to be not telling them. It didn’t go over well when he tried the other time. It really was just down to him and Rey to solve something so out of their control.

“I know a place.”

And that’s what started them back on the path to Maz and her dingy bar. Rey asked for a favour—to use the tiny apartment above the place that Maz seemed to keep for special customers and he did not want to start thinking about what that meant. The barkeep happily led them up the stairs.

“Just watch the fire escape, the window can stick,” she warned, slamming the small frame. The bachelor apartment was really just two rooms—a bedroom with a kitchenette and a small washroom. He wanted to take a shower desperately but quickly shot down that idea when he saw the shape of it. Rey was chatting with her strange friend and he sat down on the hard mattress. He flopped down, staring at the water-stained ceiling. Was this really the best idea? The room felt very, very small.

The door closed and he heard Rey moving around the kitchen. She was making coffee, he noticed as he turned his head. She moved slightly slowly when turning on the machine, overtired. She was talking lowly to herself, going over the last few hours, adjusting her suit coat as she waited for the drip to start. Watching her was a reminder of how both hard and easy it was to be around her; she had changed how she dealt with their personal space after his shift in attitude, worn down by whatever was happening him. She smoothed her hair and he thought about how her hand had felt on his and then on his body. There was only one bed, he both cringed and felt slightly warmed by the realization. Rule One was hard to focus on at this point. A block of paper sat at the bedside and she brushed by him to fetch it, lightly touching his leg as she went. Pulling out a pen, she sat down cross-legged on the bed and he realized that she was nudging him to move over. He sat up and faced her intense eyes.

“So, start again. Day 1.”

The afternoon turned into evening. Maz had brought them lunch and then dinner and both times raised her glasses to inspect their growing wall of evidence, pinned to her wall. She shook her head as she left them alone when it was about 7 p.m. Rey had removed her suit jacket and he had too. The meals—which were mostly just bad bar food, but it did the job—and plenty of coffee, as well as talking to her about the case and his previous days, had started to wake him up. Just repeating the story of the days again had started to make them seem less harsh.

“What did you say about the district attorney?” She asked, folding her hands behind her head to stretch and gaze at the pages attached to the faded wallpaper.

He set down his coffee cup and crossed the room to stand next to her.

“He…I don’t know if he was threatening me or not,” he mumbled, looking at Palpatine’s name. “I never really thought that much about it. He mentioned knowing my parents and that I was an important part of this investigation.”
“Is that suspicious to you?” She looked at him, moving to put the pen on the sheet of paper that had the names of everyone involved with the day that Kylo could remember.

He frowned. “I thought he was just being arrogant and trying to get under my skin. We haven’t had the best interactions in the past. He didn’t like how I handled this one case like a year ago.”

Rey nodded and wrote neatly: **Grudge against Kylo?**

“God, Rey, I never would have figured that out without you,” he said, his tone angry at himself. “That’s another thing we need to look into.”

She gave him a sweet smile, trying to calm him he guessed. “We’re a good team when you give me a chance.”

She brushed past him, touching his chest lightly to push by him. She poured herself another cup of coffee and studied the wall from across the tiny, yet cramped, space. He heard her sigh and wondered if she was thinking about the days he had given up. Those moments of weakness would always haunt him, no matter how many days came in between.

“Look, Rey, I know you’re disappointed in me about some of the things I chose to do…” he started.

“Kylo, don’t. I…” her voice was soft this time, not angry like before. “I got a promotion and I heard I would be partnered with you. I heard about how smart and how single-minded you are… and then you spent a month ignoring or being rude to me.”

Again, he was not proud of himself.

“I think that’s why I believed you from the start of today—you seem like a different person. Did you think you could solve this yourself? Like you tried to do during our entire partnership? You did on those other days, but now we’re here, together. And we’re getting there.”

“We still don’t have enough pieces.” He had to look away from her, back to the wall. The way she was leaning against the small counter, eyeing him, made her body look long and inviting. Her hair was down, loose on her shoulders. She sipped on her coffee and he had glanced at her lips. Better to look away. “But we’re getting there.”

He yawned and had to sit down, taking off his glasses to rub his eyes. It was nearing 9 p.m. The hours and minutes were ticking by and he was starting to get nervous. Any noise from the hallway or outside the window made him tense. The dull, thudding music from the bar downstairs had increased over the course of the evening. The room suddenly felt very small and not that safe.

He felt her sit down next to him, her hand brushing his. “Yes, we’re getting there.”

Her pinkie finger found his and she locked them together.

“It’s going to be hard to do much more,” she said, lowly. He still couldn’t look at her. “But we’ll have a good start tomorrow.”

“If you believe me again,” he said in a mumbling tone, trying to ignore how the slightest touch instantly gripped his core. Her perfume had faded but he could still catch a hint of her delicate scent. She was too close.

“We’re safe here, Kylo.” Her finger started to trace up and down his. “I wish I could remember the other days.”
“It would really help.” He finally looked at her. Too close, she was too close. She was tired but also focused on him. “It takes time to tell you all of this.”

“Good thing I’m a quick learner,” she said, grinning. Her dimples crinkled and again he drawn to her delicate mouth and the sweetness within it. He had to keep going to her for the chance to see those types of genuine looks. Her smile softened. “I’m sorry you’ve had to watch me die.”

“Don’t say that.” He shook his head. “You’re the one who dies.”

“Maybe not today?” She took his hand and fully entwined their fingers, her hand warm and firm in his. “Kylo, is there anything else we haven’t thought of?”

He glanced at the wall and shook his head, trying to ignore how his heartbeat was quickening. He tried to keep his voice flat. “We have a plan for tomorrow, whether or not it’s today again or not.”

“So this would be a…” her hand moved up his arm, “…convenient time?”

He turned to give her a look of warning. He had to push away the way her mouth looked: slightly opened as her tongue licked her lower lip. “Rey…”

She reached up with her other hand to tuck a strand of hair behind his ear. It was the softest touch, a gentle nudge that sent his mind racing. “I’ve been thinking about what you said and what has happened on this insane day. Maybe I’ll wake up and it will be tomorrow and I’ll have to commit you because all of this will be crazy when you really think about it. But I also think about the first time I met you and you looked so confident and strong. I…I had a crush on you.”

“I bet that went away quickly.” He gave her a tight smile, bitterness at his actions tainting his tone.

“Yeah, it kind of did,” she replied, smirking. “But that doesn’t mean that I don’t like looking at you. When your mouth is shut and you’re not yelling at me.”

“I’m sorry I did that.” Again, he regretted keeping her at a distance. But she was here, now. Not dead and very much stroking his arm, with her thigh pressed against his. They were safe here he had to tell himself again.

She playfully narrowed her eyes and tilted her head. “Why don’t you make it up to me?”

It was all he needed. He swiftly reached out to cup her face and bring their mouths together. She sighed instantly into the kiss, opening her mouth to his tongue. This time, she truly wanted him and really trusted him. He hadn’t imagined that she was attracted to him. God, he needed this. He needed to remember why he had to stop losing her.

He pulled her closer, guiding her onto his lap. Running her hands through his hair as she straddled him, she started to grind against him and the friction of his clothes made him moan, lowly. She did like being on top. He finally broke away from her mouth to look at her.

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“Do you want this?” He asked.

“Yeah.” She smiled. “It’s not fair that you’ve slept with me and I haven’t with you.”

“Technically, you were there.”

“Don’t be smart.” And then she was kissing him again, working slowly on the buttons of his shirt.
He shifted, trying to undo her buttons and fumbling. “Just tear it off.”

“But it costs $40,” he whispered to her, nipping at her ear lobe.

She eyed him playfully and pushed away his hands to undo the blouse. After she shrugged out of it, his hands were instantly on her back, undoing the clasp of her bra. Her skin was warm and soft and he needed to feel it against him again. She inhaled sharply as he slipped off the undergarment. He settled back from her slightly to study her body. He hadn’t noticed the small mole, just under her left breast.

She flushed. “We should have showered.”

“No, you taste great.”

She slowly leaned forward to help him out of his shirt. Kissing her again, he brought her closer, pressing their warm chests together and sighing at the sensation of having her against him. Strong but delicate, just as before.

He leaned back and she followed, deepening the kiss and starting to trace her hands across his chest. Her touches were light and explorative, finding places that made him gasp into her mouth. Her hips fell into a gentle sequence of movements, teasing his erection through his pants.

“God, I want you,” he gasped into her ear as she kissed down his jawline.

She sat up to look down at him, her hair mussed and her mouth slightly red. She rested her hands on his belt buckle and raised a teasing eyebrow. Her hands were careful but sure but his felt shaky as he rested them on her thighs. She slowly moved off of him, working on the button to her trousers. He took the hint and slid out of his dress pants. It felt both cold and freeing to be without them.

Rey stood by the bed and wiggled out of her clothes. “Get on the bed properly. My legs are starting to cramp sitting on the edge.”

“Then come here.” He stood to quickly lay them down together. Resting on their sides, he followed his hand down her side, coming to rest on her hip. She started kissing him lightly, cupping his face. He started to massage through her panties and she shuddered and moved to grip his hands, guiding him to the hem. She helped him slide them off, shivering as his hands brushed her bare skin.

She rolled her hips forward, pressing her naked sex to his clothed erection and he pulled her closer, not wanting to lose the sensation.

“God, you,” he mumbled against her neck. “Rey, please.

Her hands were on his hips, brushing against the elastic of his boxers. She met his eyes and he took a long second to admire her face, trying to memorize the delicate vision of her arousal. He wanted to see this in his memory — her eyes softened with need and her cheeks slightly pink — not the times he’s seen her empty, vacant and gone face.

“How can you do that?” She asked, softly.

“What?”

“Look at me like you won’t ever see me again.”
He brushed his lips against hers. “One day, maybe I won’t.”

“Then love me today.”

The way she sounded was genuine and did something to his heart. He needed to be in this moment and be with her, no matter what happened the next day. Swiftly, she helped him remove the last of the clothing between them and he gently moved on top of her. He knew what she liked, but his own selfish need took over. Her legs spread and she welcomed him in. He nearly stopped himself as he entered her because this was so much more than the last time. His heart shuttered dangerously as she shifted under him, sighing at the sensation of him filling her. She wrapped her legs around his back, pulling him fully into her and he gasped heavily at the sensation of her warmth, wet tightness.

Leaning over her, their mouths met again as he slowly began to thrust into her, feeling dizzy at the sensation. Touching her breasts, he felt her rapid heartbeat and heard the soft sounds that she was making with each motion of his body. Her legs were holding him tightly, helping guide him in his thrusts into her wet and warm cunt. It was almost overwhelming to feel the emotions blooming in his chest as his body tightened against her well-timed movements.

With one stroke, he hit something inside her that made her call out and she tightened around him, whimpering lightly.

He wanted it to go on longer but his body betrayed him.

“I’m going to come,” he gasped out. “You’re too perfect.”

“Yes.”

She kissed him deeply as he came inside her. Her hands dug into his back and stars floated across his closed eyes. Too perfect.

He came back to himself slowly. She wasn’t letting him go, guiding him to lay beside her before she shifted the grip of her feet to stretch out as he left her body. He hugged her then, sobbing onto her shoulder.

“Shh, it’s okay, Kylo,” she soothed, rubbing small circles on his back. “We’re okay. We’re safe.”

“Tell me what to do, Rey.” He met her eyes, searching for more than answers. “Tell me what to do when I lose you again.”

He could sense that she wanted to say that he wouldn’t. Instead, she tucked a strand of hair behind his ear and kissed the side of his mouth. “Just remember this. Remember how we came together and how we worked together. Think about the clues and we will help each other. Remember how you loved me tonight.”

The word stung him. Love. He was falling in love with her. What was he going to do about it?

He nodded, slowly, kissing her again. “I promise I will.”

She smiled, then slowly moved from the bed to the washroom. He found his clothes and was half-dressed when she returned, his shirt unbuttoned. Sitting on the bed, he studied the walls of clues again. What was he missing? What were they missing?

She returned, picking up her clothes to dress herself. She sat beside him on the bed, only wearing her undergarments.
“What are you thinking?” She asked, holding his hand.

“That there’s something we’re not seeing.” He entwined their fingers, bringing her hand up to kiss it. “The mother said that the boy must have left the apartment on his own or else he trusted who took him. He had to leave the building. How would the perp have seen him from outside the building?”

“Is that why you’re thinking it’s Dameron?”

“But why would he take his own nephew?” He mumbled. “That’s the part that’s bothering me.”

She nodded. “We need to talk to him tomorrow, even if it is just today again. I think you should stop him when he’s at the apartment. Maybe this time, don’t stop Finn. I don’t think that he knows anything. I think they’ve let him go by now. But if Dameron did take his nephew, how did the homeless man get the shirt?”

“Maybe it’s not his?” He mused. “The mother didn’t look at it that closely and it was still being tested.”

He was still going over the details when the relative silence of their room was broken by a crash and loud bang in the hallway. On his feet instantly, he reached for the door. Rattling the handle he felt his heartbeat quicken.

A note slid under the door.

Rey was there, picking up the folded sheet of paper.

Closer but still not close enough, she read aloud. I will always find you.

“The door won’t open,” he hissed, kicking at it.

From the hallway, the ringing of the fire alarm startled them. Smoke started to glide over the top of the door, slithering in like tendrils of a translucent monster, hunting for its true victims. He felt warmth start to slip through the door, growing more intense as he desperately rattled the knob. The alarm got louder in the hallway and he could hear commotion from the bar below them. The air got thicker and heavier and he heard Rey dress herself in a panic.

“The fire escape, we have to go,” she said, moving the window.

His heart fell when he heard her struggling with it.

The window can stick.

With determination, he joined her, fighting with the window. The room was heavy and hazy and Rey coughed. The smoke stung his eyes and he just couldn’t get the thing opened. He struck the glass forcefully with his elbow in quick succession and there wasn’t even a crack. He smashed at it with his palm, trying to force it to break or at least budge. Heat started to join the oppressive smoke and she sunk to the ground below the window.

“We’re trapped,” she gasped, tears slipping down her face. “Kylo, I don’t want to die. I don’t want to leave you again.”

They were both rasping against the smoke and he couldn’t catch his breath. His head was getting lighter as the oxygen was sucked from the room, replaced by toxins. He sat down next to her, pulling her close to him. The lights went out and he felt his lungs burn. The dull glow from the fire
under the door lit her face and she looked terrified, like a small child. Like the children that they were trying to save must have looked as the madman that was hunting them all snuffed them out.

She clung to him, coughing. “I’m sorry, I’m so sorry I brought us here.”

He tried to clear his throat but his lungs just felt heavy and useless. “It’s okay, Rey. It’s okay. I’m here.”

She let out a ragged and heavy cough. “I can’t…I can’t breathe.”

Light-headedness started to take over and he kissed her gently. “Shh. Just…just go to sleep.”

“Kylo?”

“Yes.”

“Get him tomorrow.”

He felt her slump against him as unconsciousness took her. The last thing he saw was the clock on the bedside tick to midnight before his vision blurred and life left his body.

Day 10

His usual shiver and jolt woke him. But this time it was at 5.56. The dull ache in his heart muted what should be a very good feeling. They’d somehow bought more time, so her plan had worked, at least a little. Instead of calling, and waiting for the note to slide under his door and the crow to hit his window, he quickly texted her. It was urgent and he needed her.

She replied as the radio clicked on.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

He followed the plan that she had set up. Don’t bother with Finn today. Follow the Dameron lead. After calling in the clue, he left his apartment door open and was standing at his kitchen table, two cups of coffee and the note resting beside him.

She walked in and, as usual, dropped her bag. “Hey, what’s going on?”

He gestured towards the note and the cup of coffee. “The perp slid it under my door this morning. He’s threatening two today. I’ve already called it in. But there’s something else I need to tell you.”

She eyed him, leaning over to read the note and then sit down to sip at the coffee. “Why aren’t you more worried about this? He was here? Did you see him?”

He shook his head. “No, but, Rey I just need to…I need you to trust me.”

She blinked. “What’s going on?”

“Look, I know I haven’t been the best partner. I’ve ignored you, I’ve been rude to you and you’ve just…been you. You’ve dealt with my temper with such patience that I don’t know how you were able to stand it. You’re a good cop and a good partner, Rey. And I need you to believe what I’m
going to tell you,” he spoke in low, careful tones, meeting her eyes. They were the same eyes that he’d looked into when he made love to her twice and the same eyes he’d seen die.

“I know I didn't get to pick you, and it’s been hard, especially with this case…” she started. “But you’re my partner…I have to trust you. Kylo, what’s happening? You’ve never talked to me like this before.”

He took a breath. “I’ve already lived through today. This is the tenth time I’ve woken up to a note at my door. I know exactly who will be coming on the team; the captain will be with them, and Dameron will be here. I know that you’ll stay and wait for me to get ready. I know where the girl’s body will be dropped and where the next child will be taken. I know that your blouse costs $40 and your friend Maz has a dingy little apartment above her bar. You have a small mole right here on your ribs. It all keeps happening over and over again and I can’t stop it without you. Rey, I really need you to believe me to get through today. Yesterday, we were so close. I can’t solve this case without your help.”

“That…that’s not normal,” she managed to say. She looked down at her coffee mug and the note, going over the details of things he couldn’t possibly know. “What you just said sounds so unbelievable. But if you think what’s happening has already happened, then I need to believe you.”

He almost smiled. “That’s…that’s good.”

“I’m not going to ask how you know about the mole.” She narrowed her eyes. “But what happens next?”

He nodded. “My main suspect is Dameron right now. It’s his nephew that gets taken next and he disappears shortly after leaving here. We need to get him now and find out what he knows. You…you told me to do that yesterday.”

She took a deep and long breath. “I’m so confused, but if you or me or whatever thought this was the best step, then let’s do it.”

“Good, Rey.” He finished his coffee and moved to put the mug in the sink. “Thank you.”

“For what?” She joined him by the sink and stood near him, meeting his eyes. She leaned against the counter and seemed to be trying to figure him out. “Who are you and what have you done with my partner?”

He reached out to take her hand. She flinched slightly, but didn’t fully pull away. Warmth replace panic in his chest.

“I’ll tell you everything after we talk to the team and get Dameron alone.” He gripped her hand. “They’ll be here soon, so I can’t explain it all right now but just ask about the t-shirt and why the homeless man has it. It will look too suspicious if I ask all of the questions. The boy’s mother has financial troubles too. There’s something here and we need to figure out what it is.”

He lightly kissed her hand before letting it go. She watched him cross the room to move her bag.

“You drop it there every day,” he explained, looking across the apartment at her confused face. “I’m…I’m just trying to find out what things to change to make it through the day.”

They were interrupted by the arrival of the team and the questions that came with them. He was carefully eying Dameron the entire time, trying to figure out how to get him alone. He caught Rey’s eyes and she nodded, moving to stand by the wall, near the investigators. He couldn’t fully hear what she was saying, his attention on talking with the captain. Again, he had to be patient and
show that he was under control.

“So this is a lead? The letter is about two children so we need to take our chances.” The captain was rigid as he sighed. “Why would he involve you directly?”

Kylo shook his head. “That’s what we need to track down. I have some sources to check out. Can you pull in two others so we can track them down?”

The captain regarded him with slow thought. “You seem quite certain about this. I think I can pull some strings. We should…we are…we are waiting for the report about the Windu child.”

Kylo nodded, firmly. “I know, sir, but I think I can track down more information. Can Dameron wait here for a while? I need to ask him some things about the most recent report.”

“Okay.” He nodded and motioned for the other man to come over.

Kylo stood off to the side with Rey as the captain gave him the instructions to stay as the others cleared out. Kylo noticed how Dameron’s fists were clenched and he tried to refuse, but was given the orders to stay. He motioned to Rey and she nodded, her arms folded across her chest. The door closed and the three were alone.

“What’s this about? You didn’t even look at the last report I gave you.” Dameron focused on Kylo. “Come on, man, I’ve got a place to be and work to do for you.”

“That’s what we’re here to talk about,” Kylo answered. He motioned for him to sit down and once again he sat across from someone who was somehow connected to the case, but in a different way from the Finn guy. Rey joined him on the couch, her notebook in hand. That reminded him that he had to write down the rules, but that could wait.

Dameron huffed down onto the couch. “So go on. Don’t be so mysterious.”

“Tell us about your sister’s money problems,” Rey said, falling into the role of faking like she knew more than she actually did. She met the other man’s eyes seriously and her voice was firm. He’d never stop being proud of her abilities.

He wiped his face with his hands and sat forward to rest his elbows on his knees. “What exactly do you think that you know?”

“Why don’t you fill us in,” she shot back. “And why are you worried about your nephew.”

“Oh goddammit, okay,” he started to speak rapidly and Rey took quick notes; Kylo was silent, trying to look intimidating. “So, all right, she’s been having a rough time the past year or so. She’s been off and on drugs for years and I keep trying to help her out but this time, her husband actually split. I mean, I like the guy but he couldn’t deal with her anymore. Elias is a trooper, but it’s not his job to take care of his mom, you know? So the other day, she’s telling me how she can’t make rent and needs to borrow more money. I know where the money is going. Right up her nose. But the rent needs to be paid tomorrow and the cops, you guys, the city, you pay peanuts.”

“That’s not our fault,” Kylo said.

Dameron shot him a glare. “Well, you’re living pretty well here…”

“This isn’t about me,” Kylo replied, firmly. “This is about why you are in a hurry to pick up your nephew without her knowing about it.”
Dameron’s eyes got wider. “How did you…okay, never mind. You’re cops and I guess you can solve some cases without us having to do all the work. So, yeah, I’m talking to Elias and he tells me how mommy is going to send him away for a while and I thought that he meant his dad, right? Nah, he says some people are coming to take him on a trip for a while. He tells me they’re coming on Tuesday. And I lose my shit. I call her ex and he says that she’s been threatening to sell him when she’s at her lowest. Like, that’s why he stuck around so long. I can’t let her fuckin’ do that so you need to let me go get him before it’s too late.”

“How does the homeless man get his shirt?” Rey asked, again faking it.

“Huh? What homeless man?”

“The burnt one, Snoke.” Kylo answered.

“I have no fucking idea what you are talking about.”

Kylo rolled his eyes. “Okay, you knew that we were looking for him. Why did you stash him and not tell us that you had him. Why were you sending us on a lead you knew was wrong?”

“I just…wait what?”

Kylo waved his hand, glancing at his watch. He pulled out his card from his pants pocket to hand to the man. “Nevermind. Look, go. Go get him. But don’t throw us off the killer’s trail. I don’t care if you think we’re not paying you enough or you have some problem with the city, we can’t lose focus on the actual killer. Tell us when you have him and he’s safe.”

Dameron was on his feet before Kylo was finished talking. “I have no idea what the hell you are talking about but yeah, I’ll…I’ll let you know.”

He was out the door and Rey let out the breath that she was holding.

“You don’t think he’s the boy? The one that will be taken?” She looked down at her notes, trying to put it together.

He felt the cold annoyance spread through his body. This was another change that he wasn’t expecting.

“I…I’m not sure.” He shook his head. “Maybe he is and Dameron doesn’t get there in time. Maybe that’s what happened on previous days. I’m…Rey this is new and I’m not sure what to do.”

She sighed. “Well, maybe you can actually explain what’s going on after we shower and change. You made sure we were on our own so you’ll really have to fill me on what’s happening.”

He suddenly remembered one of the other days he had chosen the boy over her — was he even the right boy? — and quickly rose and locked the door. And then he thought twice about it.

“I will, but we should go to your place,” he said quickly. “The killer knows where I live and I don’t think he knows your place. Maybe he does. But we’ve never been there before. It’s…it’s worth a shot.”

She rolled her eyes. “Yeah, sure.”

“Don’t forget your bag.”

She glanced down at her belongings and then back at him. “What happens if I do?”
He sighed. “It…it’s a long story. I’ll tell you on the way.”

Her apartment was within walking distance from his so they left the car. He was beginning to get suspicious that the killer was somehow able to track his car and his movements. Walking felt better. His legs could stretch and he could feel her breathing beside him, footsteps filling his ears over his stuttering heart. Was Dameron a dead end? Now he was down to no real suspects other than the sketches of ideas they’d come up with last night or the previous today or whatever it was.

He was quiet the first part of the walk, trying to gather his thoughts. She would glance at him suspiciously until he finally figured out what to say.

“Rey, there’s an end to this day that I haven’t been able to stop. The first time I lived through the same day, I thought I could get ahead of him. I went to where they find the girl and we tried to catch him but he saw us and just dumped her. I told them where they could get to the boy and thought that we’d be able to stop it. Then we came back to my apartment and he just…he came in and he shot you. You died. Again.” A pained look clearly crossed his face at the last part of his statement as she reached out to grab his arm.

“Again?”

“Yeah, the first day, the first today, he killed you just before midnight. And last night, we didn’t make it to midnight either,” he said, slowly. “And every other day, you’ve died. I can’t stop it. We try to run, you die. We stay here and hide, you die. But we’re getting closer.”

“How?” She wasn’t letting go of his arm as they walked. It felt reassuring to have her close. He kept sweeping the street for the truck because that was part of this too. But now they were changing things. They weren’t where they were supposed to be again.

“This morning, I woke up three minutes earlier. The first few times, it was always 5.59. The thing is, if I live too, then I can’t stay awake past two in the morning. There are two end points to the loop and they seem just…random.”

“You mean end points other than dying.” Her hand slowly fell from his arm and he missed it instantly.

“Yeah, other than that.”

They reached her apartment building and she gently stopped him, touching his chest to get him to get him to look at her. “So you die too?”

He shook his head. “Not every time. But when I do, I die with you. Or for you.”

He met her eyes and longed to kiss her. He would have to tell her about the other days too and he was torn up about how to explain that to her again. Studying her mouth, he wondered if Rule One was slowly becoming the most important thing to follow today and other days. He was terrified of having to hold her as she died again. Impulsively, he put his hand on her hip, brushing the skin of her bare stomach.

“There’s something you’re not telling me.” She looked from his hand back to his face. “I think there’s a lot you haven’t told me.”

“Let’s get off the street and I’ll…I’ll try to tell you.” He let her step away to open the door.

Her apartment was smaller than his yet neat and ordered, but did show that she was a cop. There were notes about the case taped around her kitchen and various notebooks and investigation guides
carefully stacked on the kitchen table and on the coffee table. There weren’t any family pictures; her décor was almost anonymous and he couldn’t read more into that.

“I’m going to shower first,” she said, closing and locking the door. “If you need to sort out your thoughts.”

“Yeah, that would be good,” he replied, watching her remove her ponytail to let her hair fall to her shoulders. Memories of last night ghosted across his mind and he looked away. “Do you have a clean notebook?”

“Top drawer under the coffee maker,” she called, disappearing down a small hallway. A door opened and closed. Eventually, he heard the shower running.

He was writing out the rules and the notes he could remember from yesterday when his phone started buzzing. The number was from a payphone, he noticed.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, it’s Poe,” the man sounded slightly out of breath. “I’ve got Elias without her knowing. I left my phone at the lab so I can’t know if she’s called it in or not. The problem is that when I got there, there was a note for Ben Solo waiting. What does that have to do with anything?”

He sighed both out of relief and out of annoyance. “That…that’s good that you have him. I knew about the note. I’ll figure that part out. Call your lab and apologize to your assistant. She’s pissed that you left your phone.”

“I’m not going to ask how you know that because you are one weird guy,” Dameron spoke quickly. “I’m going to take him to her ex’s and then head back to work. Is that…does that sound like a good idea?”

“Yes, do that.” Kylo quickly wrote Dameron, not a suspect as a rule. “We need to figure out who he actually takes.”

“I’ll help you guys out,” he replied. “If we get the call, I’ll be in touch.”

“Thank you. And I’m…I’m sorry.”

He heard Dameron snort. “Jesus Christ, Kylo, you’re apologizing? What the hell is happening with you today?”

He heard the washroom door open and Rey joined him in the kitchen, changed and gestured at the phone. He gave her a quick nod.

“I’ll let you know another day.”

He hung up and stood to join his partner.

“Does he have the boy?” She asked.

“Yeah, he’s safe.” He ran a hand through his hair. “But I’m still worried that it will still be him somehow. I…we’ll talk when I’m done.”

He grabbed the bag he brought with him and went to shower and change. The first day replayed in his mind. This was about following the right clues and the boy was apparently not a clue. In fact, the note was just there to purposely throw them off. It was like the homeless man said; he knew
where they were supposed to be. But why would he come after them if Dameron was the one that took him? Maybe he still couldn’t be trusted. Or maybe he had lied to keep them from finding the boy and telling the mother what had happened. It was circular reasoning. He couldn’t find a way to connect the killer to their personal troubles.

Her washroom was clean and bright, but smaller than his. When he took his mind off the case, he took in more pieces of her life. The scented shampoo and soap she used; the colourful flowers on the shower curtain. There was a softness to her that she couldn’t really show at work.

Drying himself, he tried not to take too long. The towel she’d left was fluffy and a shade of rose that reminded him of her lips. The fact that the killer seemed to be able to find them anywhere and everywhere bothered him, but he could take in these small, simple things. Eventually, life would go on. Right? He never took the time to look at the simpler things, usually under his annoyingly misshaped nose.

The connection finally dawned on him and he rushed out the door, half dressed. He didn’t have time to do up his buttons because he needed to tell her.

She jumped when he burst into the kitchen area.

“He was trying to tell us we were following the wrong boy the entire time!”

She had been sitting at the table and jolted up from her notes. “Kylo, slow down and just tell me. And do up your shirt.”

“Sorry I…sorry.” He quickly started blundering with the buttons. “He kept telling us we were following the wrong clues and picking him. He left the note as a test. Maybe he meant that we were choosing the wrong child and had to think deeper. He was mad that we were following the wrong clues.”

“Okay, I think I get it.” She jotted down the information. “Wait, what’ve you written down?”

She grabbed the notepad before he could take it, again, and he winced as she read the first rule and looked up at him. She didn’t glare but seemed very guarded regarding his motivations at that point.

“Look I…Rey…” He sat down. “About that. I’m sorry. Don’t be mad.”

“Just…” She closed her eyes and sighed. When she looked at him again she didn’t look angry, but instead more expectant than anything. “Tell me about the days, the last nine of them or whatever you said. Don’t leave out anything or I will be mad.”

So he told her. The story was starting to get longer and longer as he was starting to leave out anything emotional or humiliating regarding his reactions. She would frown each time he described how she died or how he died. But she was also taking notes and giving him soft looks and words of encouragement to keep talking. When he got to the final day, trying not to leave out the details that were still fresh in his mind, she reached out and took his hand.

“I’m so sorry, Kylo. I’m sorry you’re going through this alone.” She squeezed his hand lightly. “But I’m here now and we’ll solve this together.”

He silently held her hand, nodding. He could trust her. It felt good to be able to repeat the story again. It reminded him of what she said; they had that night together and the killer couldn’t take that away from him.

She cleared her throat, slowly pulling away to look at her notes. “When we…when we had sex?
Was it good?"

“It was fantastic, Rey. It was… it was something beautiful.”

She slowly exhaled. “I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. Or think you do. Or whatever is happening.”

“Hence, Rule One.” He gestured. “I don’t know how you feel about me today, but I…I care about you. I wish I had given you a chance earlier because you are smart, beautiful and capable and seeing you take charge just makes me realize how hard it must have been to work with me.”

“Kylo, the reason I believed that something was happening to you was the way you talked to me. You haven’t really looked at me like a person until now.” Her voice was soft, but still made him shiver. “Me dying is part of the case, whether we like it or not.”

“Midnight, two a.m. and us dying,” he said as he wrote the words down. “Those are our end points.”

“So p, you mean if I shot you right now, it would reset the day and I wouldn’t die?” She asked.

He hadn’t really thought about it before. “I’m…I don’t know.”

He was slightly worried for a few seconds that she would actually do it before she patted his arm.

“I’m not going to shoot you, don’t worry.”

“Maybe it would work, you’ve been right about other things before,” he said with a shrug. “I don’t take it personally.”

“Well, it would at least make us more equal on the death count,” she replied, smirking. She was actually making a joke. He smiled at her lightly and shook his head.

Rey smiled broadly, then exhaled. “I actually don’t think that it would work. I mean, I seem to die when you don’t do anything, so I think that it would just reset the day. And maybe you’d lose the few minutes you gained today.”

“Are you…are you disappointed that I just seemed to give up on those days?”

She stood from the table and retrieved a teapot and two cups from her cupboard. After setting the water to boil, she finally turned to look at him again. The silence seemed to stretch on longer than the few minutes it took her to prepare the tea.

“You already know what I’m going to say.” She met his eyes and spoke with a forgiving tone. “You’re making up for it by making us real partners. And now we have a real lead that the boy was just a coincidence that he used as a decoy and tried to trick us, like he’s been playing us all along. It’s the same with the shirt. We were following the wrong clues.”

His phone started to ring and he tore himself away from her. “Yeah, Ren.”

“Hey it’s Dameron. Look they think they got a real call. Some kid got snatched by a guy in black in Central Park and scared the hell out of the parents. What morons still take their kids out? I’m heading down there now, you guys good to meet us there?” He sounded like he was moving, quickly heading down an echoing hallway.

Kylo was still slightly reluctant to fully trust the other man, but found himself nodding. “Yeah, text
us where.”

He hung up and she stood.

“Time to go?”

“Yeah.” He briefly shut his eyes. “Please tell me that any change is good change.”

“What’s wrong?” She asked, moving to stand next to him at the table.

He lifted his shoulders. “I… I sort of got used to knowing what’s going to happen. It’s weird when something new happens.”

He wasn’t prepared for her to reach up to pull him down into a deep kiss. His already frazzled nerves couldn’t deal with the soft and tender gesture and he just gaped at her when she stepped back. “Was that weird?”

“No.”

“Good. Let’s go.”

They took a cab to the location that Poe had texted them, near the zoo, before they left. His leg bounced nervously as they drove. She was going over her notes, humming to herself whenever she had a question for him about some detail.

“Did you say that we started to suspect that the DA was involved?”

He gave her a rough nod. “Yeah, that’s another thing we need to dig into when we get the time.”

“Maybe we’ll have time today,” she agreed, making another note. “Stop being nervous. We’ll do this together, okay?”

She reached out to take his hand again and he sighed. He didn’t deserve her.

They rolled up to the park and he spotted the congregation of the team in the distance. Following the trail, he tried to clamp down on his panic. This was the same feeling he had yesterday. They were making progress and that shouldn’t make him worried. He had been so quick to irresponsibly give up after flailing during the first few days. She’d changed him. She was teaching him to be a better detective and a better person.

“What have we got?” She asked, greeting Mundi and Muva at the edge of the police tape.

“Surprised to see you two.” Muva raised an eyebrow. “Track down all your leads?”

“Most of them,” Kylo answered. “Fill us in.”

“After we found the Windu girl dead, we got the call. We first thought he’d snatched a boy in Staten, but Poe told us that it was his coked-out sister faking it or something. At first, we thought that it was finally over. Then those folks over there, the Jinns, say that some nutjob in black threatened them with a knife and took their son,” Mundi said, gesturing at a terrified-looking couple, talking to some special victims officers. “It’s the first time we’ve got witnesses so we must be getting close. Whatever you two were doing, it pressed him.”

“That’s good,” Rey quickly said. “What could they say about him?”

“Talked funny,” Muva added. “Like some sort of voice changer thing. Wore a mask. What is this
freak?”

Kylo took a deep, long breath. They really were on the right track. “Was there a note?”

The other detective gestured. “Check out the tree that Dameron’s working on.”

They crossed the grass and found the investigator.

“I’m guessing you didn’t tell them about the other note?” Kylo asked when the other man looked up in greeting.

“Yeah, I figured he was just trying to fuck with you,” he shrugged. “I’m, look…” He met Kylo’s eyes. “I’m sorry that my family drama got mixed up in this. I don’t get how this is about you, but he’s upping his game. Look at this.”

Stabbed into the tree, was a picture of them, taken outside her apartment building. His hand on her waist. The knife was stabbed into Rey’s head.

“Fuck,” Kylo gasped. “He was following us. How is he following us?”

“We weren’t supposed to be there.” She shook her head, looking at him. “I thought we changed it.”

“Wait, wait, changed what?” Dameron looked confused.

“We…there’s no time to explain,” Kylo tried to keep his voice neutral. “We have to figure out how he’s always following us.”

Her phone plinged and she instantly looked up at him. “Our phones! We always have our phones with us, look at the previous days.” She started flipping through her notebook and went over each of the days. “We never leave our phones anywhere.”

“But he did.” Kylo quickly pointed at Poe. “He left his phone at the lab. Maybe he was planning on taking the boy and he’s been off from the start. He didn’t take another kid the other days because we were blindly following leads that weren’t there.”

“What in the hell are you two talking about? Other days, what?”

“Dameron, just…” Rey waved her hand at him. “We’ll let you know tomorrow.”

She grabbed Kylo by the arm and started to guide him away so they could talk in private. They left Poe standing alone, nearly stammering another perplexed reply. “I guess we’ll talk tomorrow!”

Kylo’s heart was beating in his ears as they neared the edge of the park. Rey was still making notes, talking excitedly the entire time. They were closing in and it made him want to grab and kiss her, hug her and almost celebrate. Yesterday (or the previous today or Day Nine or whatever) was almost worth it. They stopped near the edge of the park, away from the scene and he grabbed and squeezed her shoulder.

“Rule Seven: No Phones.” He said. She looked up and beamed at him.

“Maybe we should replace Rule One?”

He grinned at her. “Let’s…let’s not get ahead of ourselves.”

Standing near Fifth Avenue, they were in a sense of mutual attraction and satisfaction. They really did need to follow the right clues and get ahead of him. Not able to hold back, he reached down to
pull her into another kiss and she met him half way. The panic of the change to the day had melted down into the excitement of finally getting closer to solving the case. He had her and she seemed to melt into his touch....

“Ben Solo!”

Their heads snapped up. About fifteen feet away, closer to the street and the people and the world, stood the stranger in black. His heart felt like it was going to stop as he swiftly pulled out his weapon.

“Stop, police!”

The stranger just shook his head and took a short few steps to a waiting car that quickly drove off. Shit, shit.

“The cab!” Rey called, running to a stopped taxi on the avenue. She jumped in and he hurried to join her.

She flashed her badge at the driver. “Quickly, sir, follow that black car.”

“He knows we’re behind him, he wants us to follow him, he has to,” he said, quickly, studying his phone in the closed space of the cab. How was he able to do that? He had to figure out what to do about all of this if there was another today.

The car turned ahead of them as they were following, the driver reluctantly weaving around other cars to keep up with him. “Where’s he going?”

“The Queensboro.” Kylo realized, seeing signs for the bridge start to fly by.

The car slammed to a stop and the black-clad man ran out, taking the pedestrian bridge. He wanted the chase. Their taxi stopped and Kylo was running before he could think again. He heard Rey behind him as they closed in on the man. Close. They were so close.

The man suddenly stopped and turned to face them, pointing his blade menacingly. “Finally starting to follow the right clues!”

They both aimed their weapons at the man as pedestrians scattered. Rather than shielding Rey, he moved to step in line with her. The wind blew around them, whipping bits of caution tape in his face and he brushed it away; they were together as a team. The stranger had nowhere to run. He was focused on his target and it made him feel stronger having her with him. They would get their answers.

“Why are you doing this?” He shouted. “Why is this about me? About the children?”

“CHOOSE! The boy or her!”

“Your choice is a lie!” Kylo yelled again, stepping closer. Rey was in stride with him, again.

“There is no real choice to make. I don’t see the boy here! I will shoot you if you do not put your weapon down.”

The stranger laughed and took a small step forward and Kylo pulled the trigger.

He had aimed at his head, to be honest, but hit his shoulder. The stranger hunched over in sudden pain and dropped to his knees. With a quick look over his shoulder at his partner — and she was his — he stepped forward to close the gap and kick the man to the ground to press the wound
further. The stranger had fallen and he moved to push away the weapon. But he needed answers and forced his foot against the wound. This man needed to feel pain. He needed to die by Kylo’s desperation.

“Why are you doing this?” He hissed, pressing the man further to the ground. As he reached for the mask, he heard distant, running, footsteps and turned to yell. He saw a flash of dark robes, but it was already too late.

“Rey!”

But there he was — a second man. Clearly, they had been set up from the start and again he had acted without thinking. Rey had turned too slowly and the second man had her locked in his arms.

Kylo took in the scene that he had missed earlier. The tape flapping in their faces was from a gap in the protective pedestrian fence, marked off for protection and warning. And Rey was struggling against her sudden attacker, but had been taken by surprise, her gun knocked away. She was strong but he had her in a chokehold; she was gasping and struggling wildly, looking at him for help. His heart quickened when he realized that that the attacker was pressing her closer and closer to the gap in the fence. He moved his sight from the man he had pinned to the ground to the second attacker.

“Stop!”

But this man didn’t say anything. He simply took out a blade and stuck it in her side and then slit the warning tape. With one vicious push, he tossed her over the edge.

With that, he made his choice.

He lunged for her, leaving his pinned target, and reaching wildly. She was just clinging onto the side of the bridge.

“Kylo, don’t…don’t let them get away,” she rasped as he grabbed at her, finding her hand. She was just hardly holding on and he tried to pull her up, but she yelled in pain. He could feel her slipping away. Her hand was bloody and slick and he couldn’t believe he had caught her. But it wasn’t enough.

He cast a quick glance at the two men in black. The second, taller, one had moved behind him in his haste to help her up, and he was guiding the other one; they were slowly slinking away. He turned his attention back to her.

“Come on! I’ll pull you up.”

He felt her hand weakening in his grip. In the wind, and the air, he could only look at her. Blood was slipping down her side, dripping down her leg and being tossed into the wind in small angry beads, and she looked pale, barely hanging on.

“Rey! Don’t give up.” He clung to her hand, still casting glances at the two men in black as they limped away towards the other side of the bridge.

Her hand kept slipping and he kept leaning forward. “Please, please Rey, not today.”

She looked woozy and white as she spoke. “Get him tomorrow, okay?”

And then she let go of his hand.
And he dove after her.

Day 11

He shivered and he jolted awake. He could faintly remember hitting the water and still struggling for air. He remembered trying to reach for her, but his body was broken as they both drowned. It was 5.54 and it was today again. He wept for six minutes before the radio turned on.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

There were new rules and new characters.

And he didn’t want to deal with any of it.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks everyone for the comments! My mum might be able to come home tomorrow so I'm hoping for the best. There's some sexual content and violence (as usual) in this chapter. But hey, if you've read the other parts y'all know what you are in for (major character death, etc)...also a bit of a longer chapter. Enjoy.
Day 11, cont.

Chapter Summary

Dameron is let in on the time loop as Kylo tries to trust more people to help solve the case. Rey reveals why she joined the force and they get finally see the face of one of the suspects.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for ALL of the comments and kudos! My mum is home from the hospital, but since the term has started, I'll have teaching and post-doc research to work on throughout this month. I hope that I'll have spare time to keep working on this but it is a bit of work to keep everything straight :) I also decided to start dividing the chapters up by the days. I think it will make it easier to read. Thanks for reading! Again, the warnings are in the tags.

Day 11 cont.

Kylo Ren couldn’t feel sorry for himself for too long. The radio dully nattered at him in the background and he had to fight from spending the day in bed, hiding. He would eventually have to explain it again to Rey and see the disappointment in her eyes. He contemplated not telling her about those days, but they were a reminder of what he had to fight for: he had to figure out how to save her and solve the case.

He sat up, and stretched. Okay, he needed to contact her and Poe. He rolled around the thought of telling the other man. Maybe he could figure out what and how the killer was tracking their phones.

The fact that there were two suspects now made his head hurt, but also helped add to how he seemed to be able to be both everywhere and nowhere. One was smaller and the other seemed to be larger, maybe older. He tried to recall everything about the bridge without touching the part that made his heart ache. She’d given up, but trusted him to fix it. Everyday, she trusted him. That part lifted his mood. Holding her close at the edge of the park, kissing her in a heated moment of realising that they had followed so many wrong leads, started to creep into his mind. He needed to focus on the good parts of the days and not how they always ended.

Okay, Poe. He shook his head and tried to get into this today. He called the lab first instead of calling Rey or the team. Maybe giving Poe the heads up would make him more agreeable.

“Yeah, it’s Dameron. And it’s too early. What’d you want?”

“Hey, it’s Detective Ren.” He had to hold back an angry response at the tone of the technician. “Look, I’ve got something from the killer. He’s left a note under my door.”
He heard the desk chair slide back and the other man swear. “Fuck, of all days, ugh, okay, wait, why are you calling me?”

He rolled his eyes and tightened his grip on his phone. “Look, I… I’m going to call it in but we need to talk to you about your nephew and some other things. Can you stick around for a bit? When you get here?”

There was a slight intake of breath on the other side. “Well, I guess there’s a reason that you’re a detective. Yeah, call it in and I’ll be there. Will your hot partner be there?”

He thought he would break his phone. “Just get here. I’ll send you the address.”

“All right.”

He exhaled so hard that it almost hurt. He quickly turned to call Rey to block out the annoyance he felt at thinking he could trust another person other than her.

“Yeah, Niima.”

He would never get tired of hearing her voice on the morning after. But it partly made him apprehensive. He’d have to persuade her again to trust him. Even though it had worked so far, he was always worried that he would get angry or frustrated that it wasn’t going faster.

“Yeah, it’s me,” he managed to say. “Look, can you come by my place? The perp was here and he left a note.”

“What? He was there? Wait right there, what’s your address again?”

He almost cringed at hearing her repeat the same words. He was getting impatient and he was trying to convince himself that it was a bad idea to snap at her.

“Yeah, Rey, I need you here. I’ll text you the address. It’s not that far away from where you are.”

He hung up before she could reply. He texted her the address and again dialed the number to the team and call them in. He felt more on edge with the change in the day, yet the variation had bought them more time. But, instead, he was more annoyed at having to try to live through a different day. He almost longed for the days that he knew rather than this new set of events. But it was progress, right?

The crow hit his window—was it early today?—and he was brought back into the loop. With all of the connections, he was starting to realize that the killer — whichever one of the two — must be in the loop too. And he must not be too happy with their actions, given how he was reacting.

He needed to talk to Rey. He realised, pacing nervously around his apartment as he waited for her to arrive. He needed her to talk him down from the mood he was in. Nothing would be right until she showed up. He’d opened the door, after carefully picking up the note again. He was pretending to read it when she knocked on the doorjamb.

“Rey,” he greeted, almost too happily.

“Hi,” she answered, looking confused at his recognition of her as she dropped her bag by the door. Should he bother to move it today? “What have you got?”

“Look, come here.” He gestured towards his kitchen table. “We’ve got a lead here with this.”
He showed her the note and she looked slightly confused but still nodded. “Have you already called it in? Did you see him?” She asked again, rapidly, before again grabbing her bottle of water. He just wanted to close the space between them and instantly have her on his side again. He wanted to spill everything right there but she was again, shifting her weight from side to side, in her work-out clothes. She wasn’t the same as yesterday’s Rey, he had to remind himself.

“Yeah, yeah I called it in.”

She narrowed her eyes. “Something’s wrong.”

*Everything’s wrong,* he nearly retorted. But instead he just sighed. “It’s been a long day.”

Her look softened and she shook her head. “So, he was here?”

“I don’t think so,” he started to disagree, shaking his head and trying not to focus on her breathing and the rise and fall of her chest. “I…Rey can I tell you something?”

“Sure, yeah,” she replied and followed him to the couch. She sat down across from him around his coffee table, bathed in the early morning light. His leg threatened to start bouncing erratically. He knew that he had to be patient or the day wouldn’t work. It was frustrating that he had to tell her over and over again and he couldn’t let it show. He rubbed his eyes and she leaned forward, concerned.

“Kylo, what’s the matter?”

He met her eyes and tried to be in that day and moment with her. That tended to work when he needed to ground himself. Here she was, alive again. She was worried about her partner. She was called in to hear information about a potential lead. This was a new Rey. He wished that she could remember just for one day about what they had shared. He wondered if that would make it easier to keep watching her die.

“There’s something that’s happening to me and I don’t have time to tell you everything right now, but I need you to trust me,” he paused, trying to remember again what he’d said before and not let the words just spill out. “I know I haven’t been a good partner. You’ve tried so hard to get along with me and I’ve been an asshole. But today, Rey, today something is happening and I need your help. I thought I had it figured out but now I know what should happen, but there’s so much more that I don’t know. We need to solve the case and stop today from happening again.”

“Again?”

“It’s the same day for me, Rey, and I think that it’s the same day for the killer. He seems to know where we will be and yesterday we realized that he was following our phones. Or maybe he is, I still haven’t figured that out yet.” He sighed, remembering her voice in the park and the feeling of kissing her before everything fell apart. “That’s why I need your help.”

He felt desperate when he met her eyes again. She looked at him with the careful patience that she always seemed to have with him.

“You’re my partner,” she started. “And what you just said sounds so unbelievable. But if you think what’s happening has already happened, then I need to believe you. Kylo, I know I didn’t get to pick my partner, but I’m here now.”

“You trust me?”

She leaned back, stretching her hands behind her head. He knew how she tasted and felt. It was
always hard to look at her before she knew what they had shared before.

“You’re talking to me like a person; you’ve never done that before.” She shrugged, shifting to rest her elbows on her legs. It was an innocent motion, but he saw every movement and drank it in. “Maybe you’ve gone insane. But I can go a little insane with you if it gets us closer to catching him.”

“Great, God Rey, every day, I’m always so worried that you won’t believe me.” He stood and started to pace. “I think he’s also tracking other people on the team. When Dameron gets here, we need to talk to him. The first days, I thought that he might be a suspect. The next kid that we thought was taken was his nephew but it was just a distraction by the killer. But he still seemed to know that Dameron would be the one to pick him up, or something along those lines.”

She moved to retrieve her notebook. “Right, okay. Slow down. This is hard to keep track of.”

“Yeah, I know. Try keeping it all in your head.” He tossed up a frustrated hand.

She smirked at him, moving her bag across the room. For once, she was the one to change where it sat in his apartment.

“I guess start with the previous day. How many days have you lived through? What happens?” She started writing.

“It’s something like the twelfth or eleventh time I woke up and it’s been today,” he started. “Before, it was always 5.59 but today we managed to buy some more minutes. It’s like the closer we get to him, the more time I have every morning.”

“Okay.” She nodded. He saw her write Day 11 at the top of the page. “So yesterday, what happened?”

He got to the part about the park when the team arrived. He gave her a look that he hoped she would understand to mean not to tell them. She gave him a small nod and they moved back into explaining the note, and the fact that the killer was making it personal. The entire time, Dameron was looking at him out of the corner of his eye. Once again, the captain seemed to be taken aback by Kylo’s persevering explanation of the situation. Everyone was on edge, so he had to keep himself from being tense.

They were wrapping up, taking the note with them and preparing to find the body of the girl when Dameron cleared his throat. “I’m going to stick around here. I need to clear some things with them.”

Tekka nodded. “Come by the precinct as soon as you’re prepared for the day.” He once again checked his watch, but since he had started the sequence earlier, it was 7.30. They had more time. “We will hold an emergency meeting and then…And then we will deal with whatever comes next.”

Kylo could feel Dameron’s agitation as the team cleared out. The door closed and he started talking instantly.

“Look, how do you know about my nephew?” He crossed his arms. “What’s going on?”

He looked at Rey and gave her a small nod. Better to try this experiment if it came from her.

“He’s living through the same day,” she said, with the same firm tone that she’d used before. He could tell she was holding back: Or thinks he is. “Yesterday, we got close to him.”
He nodded. “The killer somehow knows about the situation with your sister. How she’s trying to sell your nephew. The first days, we thought that he was the boy that was taken but it was really you that took him. The thing is, you forgot your phone at the lab. He didn’t know where you were going to be exactly. I think that he might try to take him if you don’t leave your phone there. He’s following us all.”

Dameron looked like he didn’t believe him but managed to jerk his head in agreement. “So what’s my nephew’s name, smart guy?”

“Elias.”

“Well, fuck, okay.” He looked frustrated that he knew such a simple fact that most coworkers would know. But not him. He wasn’t just cruel to Rey; he’d been neglectful of everyone around him. He could mull over that thought later because Dameron was still talking. “So, what do I do? I was planning on taking him today because of what he said and I guess that you know about that too?”

Kylo nodded. “Yeah, you told us.”

Dameron looked at him expectantly. “So, there’s no way to save the girl and the other kid?”

“Not the girl,” he replied and shook his head, a familiar ache growing in his stomach. “He’s going to drop her not far from here, but she was dead for hours the first time that we found her. I know where he’s going to take the other boy so… I was thinking that maybe we all try to get ahead of him but…I haven’t figured out how to do that.”

Rey had moved to stand beside him and gently touched his arm. “We’ll figure it out together.”

“How’d he get you to believe him?” Dameron asked.

She shrugged. “He’s… he just seems different. He hasn’t told me about everything, but I think that he will.”

“Sure, yeah, okay,” he said. “Look, I’m going to go get Elias and then I’ll get a hold of you guys. The lab can wait because he honestly leaves us nothing. He’s like some sort of ghost.”

Kylo nodded. “He has an accomplice, that’s another thing that we learnt yesterday. And he has the guy that works in the paper stand downstairs wrapped up in it too.”

“Finn?” Rey asked.

“Yes, he doesn’t know anything,” he sighed. “Or maybe he does. He’s the one that leaves the note.”

“Oh, this is so fucked.” Dameron looked like he was more exhausted by the loop than Kylo felt. “I need to go think about this and get the kid. I think with the phones, take them to the station and leave them there. He’ll just think that you got desk duty. Get some burner phones or something.”

It frustrated Kylo to lose the communication but agreed. “He’s watching outside my apartment. We’ll need to do something about that.”

“Yeah, I’ll think of a way to fix it.” Dameron nodded then quickly moved to leave. “Let’s do this.”

And he was gone and they were alone. Kylo let out a long and heavy sigh. Rey was staring at him with curious eyes.
“Is this the first time you’ve told him?”

“Yes, and it’s hard. The first few days, I just wanted anything to change. And now, whenever we think we’re ahead of him and the day is different, I can’t stand not being in control. Rey, I know that this is all messed up, but every day, you die. That’s the end of the day for you. I keep losing you and I can’t make it stop.” He looked at his feet, not able to meet her gaze.

“Kylo, I…” She touched his arm again, making him look at her. “I’m still trying to figure to this out. But I believe you. How…how do I die?”

He met her soft eyes and it hurt again to have to tell her. “Pretty much every way. We’ve died in a fire, he tossed you off a bridge. He’s shot you, he’s stabbed you. We died in a car crash…”

“Wait, so you can die too?”

He solemnly met her eyes. “Always with you.”

“There’s something else you’re not telling me.”

He felt his face get warm. “I, we…we’ve…uh…”

She closed her eyes, taking in the information reluctantly. “Okay, okay. I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. Or think you do. Or whatever is happening.”

“It’s been beautiful, Rey.” He wanted to hold her then, but there was still lingering worry about her reaction. “I…I know that this isn’t normal. But I have real feelings for you and it’s terrifying not to know when I’ll be able to save you.”

Rather than stepping away like he thought she would, instead her arms came around him, pulling into a tight hug. “I’m so sorry, Kylo.”

He breathed in her scent and folded his arms around her. How could he get through today again?

“Why do you always believe me?” He asked, more to himself than to her.

“I don’t really know,” she answered, stepping back to look at him. “For me, I guess this is just jarring. I remember yesterday and how you yelled at me and tried to ignore me. But here you are, talking to me like this, like a person. I still don’t know what’s going on but you need me and I guess I need you.”

He bent down to kiss her and she didn’t resist, but didn’t really respond. He sighed deeply, not wanting to let her go. The salt of sweat still lingered on her lips reminding him again of what he stood to lose. When she pulled away, she gently kissed him on the cheek and met his tired eyes.

“We’ll solve it, Kylo,” she said, lightly. “We have to.”

He ran his hand down her cheek. “I’m sorry for all of this.”

“Don’t be, it’s not your fault.” She shook her head. “But we need to get going. If Dameron gets the kid, what do we do then?”

“We, I…” He tried to focus. “Have you ever been to the zoo?”

And so it went. He let her shower first, nervously checking the door before he was able to get showered and changed. They stopped at the station and told the captain that they had a lead. Since the girl had been found and the team was in crisis mode, he looked unwilling to let them go at first.
He eyed them with mild suspicion, but let them go on their way. They got word from Dameron that the boy was safe and that he had found the other note. Explaining the situation, they told him about where the next kid would be taken and that they would be trying to find him. They left their phones in their desk drawers and he again felt worried about not being able to get information but they had to try it.

Leaving the car behind, they took a cab to the park. They didn’t have more to do than wait.

Rey stopped him by a vendor to buy breakfast. He was starting to feel less worried about the day with a bagel and a coffee.

She asked him again about the previous days as they walked around the area where he knew the boy would be taken. He was eyeing everyone that they passed, but tried to focus on her.

“The second day, the first day it all happened again, I fucked everything up. I thought that I could handle it alone and didn’t really give you a chance.” At his words, he shrugged. “I’m…there’ve been other days that I regret. I tired to get us away from the city and he followed us. I thought we were safe and that’s the first time that I, I got you into bed.”

He cringed at the way that he phrased it but there was no way to let her know.

She studied him carefully. “There’ve been other times?”

“Just one other time. I tried to make a list of rules to sort out the day. The first rule was to not let it happen again.” Rubbing the back of his neck, he sighed. “I didn’t really follow it.”

It was starting to warm up in the early autumn. He’d spent too little time in the park but was still grateful that it existed. It was a green space in the middle of a city with so many problems. It was an expanse that should be safe, but wasn’t. They were tasked with solving some of those problems but right now, he just needed to talk to her about how he was feeling. Two weeks ago, it wouldn’t have crossed his mind. Now, he needed it more than breathing.

“I think…I think it’s okay.” She stopped him, gently taking his hand. “We have a job to do here and it’s been so many stressful weeks. I haven’t been able to figure all of this out, but let’s go over the days. Let’s try to put the pieces together.”

They sat down on the grass, not far from where the boy would be in a few, short hours. He went through the days again and felt himself getting more detached from some of the harder moments. She held his hand and he continued to appreciate everything that she did and who she was.

She exhaled deeply as he finished explaining the last day. “I understand why I did that.”

“But why, Rey? Why give up?”

She leaned back stretching out on the grass. Looking out over the area of the park, she lifted her shoulders to shrug. “The other days, the other versions of me, I think that it’s about trying to solve the case. I think that there are clues that we’re still missing, so starting fresh is a way of seeing things in a new way. I trust you and know that we’ll find a solution eventually.”

“Eventually,” he mumbled, looking away.

She reached for his hand again. “Hey, what do you know about me? Have we ever talked about our pasts?”

He was embarrassed to answer. “We…it’s mostly been about the case.”
Rey laughed lightly. “I guessed as much.”

“But I’d like to know.”

Their eyes locked and he was again drawn into how she could look at him in a way that was so different from how other people looked at him. She was attracted to him and was a kind person. She was thoughtful, but also a person who could think of her feet. How did she come into his life? How did he handle things before he had her?

She nodded, smirking. “I guess we’re dating so it would be good to know.”

He actually laughed. “The only way I can date someone is if they don’t remember. This is… actually the most believable thing about this day.”

She laughed in return, sitting up. “Well, let’s get to know each other. Ask me something.”

He started to relax. They didn’t have their phones. No one seemed to be following them. She was open and wanted to talk to him. These were the good days.

“How did you get here, to America?”

She looked briefly distant but nodded. Was this the right question?

She spoke like she was far away, lost in her own mind rather than his troubles. “That’s a long story, but I guess we have time. The simple answer is that my parents were trash. Always drunk or on drugs. I never felt like they wanted me. Every day was coming home and wondering who would be in our house and what they would sell. They abandoned me when I was five or six, when they finally realised that I was eating too much and that cost them their drug money. I was stuck in care and it wasn’t good. The system there, in Britain, and the system here aren’t that different. I think that’s why I’ve had a hard time with this case — I never had a childhood so it’s so hard to see these children losing theirs. I had to work hard to keep up with school and moving home all of the time.

“But when I was fifteen, they found a great aunt that agreed to take care of me. I was overjoyed to have some family. She lived here and I took the chance to leave the second that they offered it. She was old but seemed to be glad to have someone who could help her out. There were a few good years and then…when I was in my final year of high school, we got broken into in the middle of the night. She was downstairs because she couldn’t sleep and surprised him. We didn’t have much, but it was still ours so she started screaming at him. It was terrible — I, we…he attacked her, and I tried to stop him. She was covered in blood, on the floor and I just lost it and didn’t think. He…he was high or something. I wasn’t strong enough,” she paused, looking lost. “He raped me. It…it felt like it took hours. I never thought it would stop. I still think about it all of the time. I’ve never been able to have a normal relationship since then. Every time I tell the guy I’m with what happened, it’s like I’m broken or damaged. That’s why I joined the force. The cops that did the investigation were so supportive and gave me their card. When my aunt had recovered and I was…better, I signed up. I wanted to be like them. I couldn’t let that happen to someone else again.”

Again, he thought about the first time he’d made love to her. He’d basically forced himself on her. He’d never be able to take that back to that Rey, but he could make it up to this one.

“I’m sorry I didn’t know,” he spoke lowly, holding her hand. “Rey, I’m so sorry.”

She shrugged, letting her hair down from her ponytail. “Kylo, you weren’t there. If you were, I’m sure you would have stopped him. Just like we’re going to stop this awful man.”

He tenderly put his hand on her leg, needing to connect with her. “You didn’t have to tell me all of
“But I wanted to.” She looked down at his hand and then up at him. “Does it bother you?”

“It bothers me that it happened and that I didn’t take the time to know before,” he said, firmly. “But there’s nothing broken about you. You’ve been the only bright spot in these days. Every morning, I look forward to hearing your voice again just to know that you’re still there.”

“I never thought you’d talk to me like this,” her voice was soft before she sighed. “I…had a crush on you when we first met. But I guess that you know that now.”

He smiled. They were sitting in the park, having the strangest conversation they’d had yet. She wanted to be with him. He yearned for having a tomorrow with her rather than another today.

“Yeah, you told me.”

She blushed. “What’s it like?”

“What?”

“To die.”

He took a deep breath. “It’s…sometimes it’s painless. The worst time was the car accident. That truck is another part that I can’t figure out. I know he’s got another accomplice, so he’s telling him where to be. Your friend Maz’s place isn’t safe, but we could go there again to plan, just without or phones. But dying…the time I shot myself, it happened so quickly. I just wanted you to be alive again and didn’t really think.”

“So, you mean if I shot you right now, it would reset the day and I wouldn’t die?”

He almost glared at her. “Yeah…we’ve talked about this before. I’m…we don’t think it will work. The days that I spent hiding didn’t stop the loop. You’d still probably die and I just wouldn’t be there.”

“I’m not going to shoot you, don’t worry.”

They exchanged mutual smiles and he felt his mood lifted again. Her eyes were bright and curious. He didn’t stop what he wanted to happen. She leaned forward to kiss him and he rested back on the grass, bringing her down with him. It was a beautiful day, despite what was happening and what they had to do. He wanted to be with her there and forget about the fact that he was probably going to wake up in his bed, in old clothes and feeling awful, and he’d have to start it all over again.

Her hands were in his hair and he exhaled deeply at the touch. He pulled away to look at her again.

“You’re so beautiful, Rey, and I’m sorry that I never realized what a good cop you were before today,” he said. “Well, the other todays.”

“Kylo, this is all still strange, but I’m here.” She smiled, lightly smoothing a circle on his hand. “Maybe…maybe we take another rain check day today. Like you said, it feels better when we can sit somewhere and plan.”

He wanted to. He wanted to run away with her without their phones and just see what happened. He was stuck in this and that didn’t mean she had to be.

“I’d like that,” he said lightly, and glanced at this watch. The boy and his parents should be
walking by soon. He tried not to focus on her and swept the area. He nudged her hand and she
instantly focused on the situation again, sensing his apprehension. “But maybe not today.”

He spotted them, across the expanse of the area of the park. The little brown-haired boy was
happily swinging in between his parents, laughing and smiling. They thought that they were safe
and it was his job to keep it that way. A flash of black from the treeline made him stand and Rey
followed him, reaching to put her hand on her holster.

“Stop!” He yelled, pulling out his weapon to run the short distance to the stranger who instantly
froze in shock. They weren’t supposed to be there and he didn’t know where they were. Finally, a
good surprise.

The boy and his parents stilled down the path, backing away from the situation. Rey ran to cover
them. They didn’t have him cornered but at least the boy was safe. He looked between them and
seemed to realize that he had nowhere to run.

“You…how are you here now? It’s too early.” For once, the arrogance was gone from the voice
changer.

“We’re here and we’re going to stop you!” Kylo yelled.

“Where is your accomplice?” Rey shouted, keeping her weapon trained on him.

The man straightened, rising up to his full height. He was shorter than he was but not by much. He
was trying to look intimidating. If he had a gun, he wasn’t reaching for it. Maybe he only had the
knife?

“Our mutual friend is waiting for you, Ben Solo. Apparently, you’ve made the right choices today,
but you might not tomorrow. And he will be waiting for you.” The last word was hissed, echoing
over the tranquil expanse of the park. “You’ll never save her.”

“Oh, go to hell.” Kylo said, shooting and catching him in the shoulder again. God, it felt good to
shoot him.

He dropped to his knees and clutched at his shoulder as they moved towards him. Kylo viciously
pushed him to the ground and kicked him, trying to find where the knife was. He spotted it and
ripped it off of his belt as he pinned him to the ground to pull off the mask.

A shocked man with red hair was revealed to him. He had a face now. He had a face to this one.

“Who are you and who are you working with?”

Rey was by his side but he knew he’d have to watch for another man, who was either in the car
waiting or lurking in the woods.

“He’s…he has bigger goals than all of us,” the stranger said as Kylo pressed on the wound. “This
is beyond you but you are also the problem. Without you, this would work!”

Without thinking, he punched the man hard and forcefully, knocking him out. He stood and
reached for Rey, afraid that she would be taken from him at any second. But there was nothing.
There was no one. It was just them and the man in black. He heard the sounds of the crowd that
was starting to gather and he had to pull himself back into today. They’d caught one of them. They
were so close again.

“We need to call in,” she said, gripping his hand. “Maybe you can let me go? Please?”
“No,” he replied. “Not until we’re safe. We need to get one of their phones.”

She nodded. “It’s going to be okay, Kylo. Let me go.”

He felt panic at every second that she was away from him. But it was okay. She called the office from one of the Jinns’ phones. The boy was happily playing in the grass, unaware of what was supposed to happen to him. They’d saved him. They’d done it.

When the team arrived, he numbly moved through the motions. He didn’t let Rey out of his sight. The captain was mad that they’d left their phone at the office, and for assaulting the suspect, but they could look past it for now. What mattered to them was that they’d caught him, even though he tried to explain that there might be another one.

The suspect was taken away, cuffed in an ambulance.

“The DA wants to talk to you,” Mundi said, ambling up to them as they stood off to the side. “Both of you, at his office.”

He wiped his face with his hand. Would this stop the loop? Was it over?

“Yeah, okay, we’ll need a ride.”

“That ADA is waiting for you, up the hill,” the other detective replied. “But good job, you guys. I didn’t think you’d survive him, Rey, but you came together when we needed you.”

Rey smiled lightly, still feeling Kylo’s nervousness. “We were just doing our job. The day isn’t over yet.”

They joined the ADA, Holdo, and her waiting car. Kylo really didn’t want to drive anywhere but accepted the ride, insisting on sitting in the backseat with Rey. His leg bounced nervously as they wound through the city, back to her office.

Rey was talking and he started to listen again.

“Ma’am, we think there’s another murderer and he’s the one in charge,” she was insisting. “This isn’t the one.”

The Holdo woman nodded. “We’ll talk about that with Palpatine, he’s really interested in your reports. How did you get this lead? How did you know it was the park? Was it in the note?”

He waved his hand. “It’s…it’s connected to that. We’re just doing our job.”

They pulled up the imposing court building and were ushered into a waiting office. There were reporters lurking around outside, obviously getting the news that the killer had been caught. He still didn’t want to get too far away from Rey. She never stopped looking at him, trying to reassure him but it didn’t seem to work. They reached the woman’s office, overflowing with paperwork, and she put them in the chairs across from her desk.

“Would you like some coffee while we wait? He should be here soon.”

“Yeah, sure.”

She left them and he heavily exhaled. “This doesn’t feel right.”

“I know.” She said. “We should be out looking for him.”
He leaned over to kiss her, deeply, pouring all of his anxieties into their moment alone. “I won’t let him get you.”

“I know you won’t.”

When the office door opened, the ADA rejoined them for a short time. She was shifting her weight from side to side, making his eye start to twitch.

“He’s just in a meeting, but he should be here soon. They’ve started talking to our suspect and he’s giving us nothing. We will send you back soon.” She handed them their coffee cups and bustled out of the room again.

Rey sipped lightly on hers, humming to herself. “We need to talk to the suspect.”

“He’s not in the loop,” he huffed and took a deep gulp of coffee, hoping it would shake him out of the feeling of dread. “But the other one must be, like he said. We surprised him today. That might change it again.”

They sat in the stuffy office, waiting.

She set her empty cup on the desk and huffed, annoyed at the time that they were taking.

“Why do you think he’s targeting you?” She asked.

“That’s a part I haven’t figured out,” he answered, putting his mug beside hers. “He’s using my real name so he must know something about my past.”

“Your real name?”

He cringed. She had shared something with him today so it was only fair that he opened up to her.

“I…my father was Han Solo. He was a cop, a good cop. He worked hard and even though he didn’t always go by the book, he was…he was dedicated. When I was growing up, he was always working on something. He didn’t want to be promoted to detective and he never was. When I was nine, he was killed on duty during a robbery.” He looked at his hands and they were shaking. “I didn’t want to be the son of a dead cop. I wanted to be myself. I changed my name when I was old enough to and then went to the academy.”

“I…I’m so sorry,” she said, reaching for his hand again. Her hand was also shaking and that made him pause.

He took her hand and she suddenly paled, grabbing at her chest and throat.

“Something’s not right.” She started to pant. “I don’t…”

The same, sickly feeling washed over him. His stomach clenched and his head felt light. The room started to tilt and horror washed over him.

“Kylo, I…” she gasped. “What’s happening?”

She suddenly started to shake, violently, in a seizure. He reached for her, taking her to the ground, but felt his own body betraying him. No, no, no.

“Rey, I…I’m here.”

And he felt his head start to ache, violent lightening crashing against his eyes throb. He wanted to
hold her but he couldn’t.

On the dull carpet of the ADA’s office, he slipped away.
Day 12

Chapter Summary

Kylo and Rey find valuable clues about who they think the suspect is. And again, there is a setback and Kylo tries to make an important decision. Read the tags for warnings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Day 12

Again, he woke up: in his apartment, in his bed. It was still before his alarm, but this time it was only 5.57. That part made him frown. Weren’t they getting closer? Dammit. The radio clicked on and he mocked the broadcasters out of boredom.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

So, start again. Do it all again. They didn’t get that much extra time today, but he filed that away, along with the rules. He had to focus on his duty and not get carried away by his emotions. They were starting to hang by a thread and it bothered him that he couldn't focus. Before this day, he could attack a case with passion and concentrate on what mattered. Why was that so hard for him now, when there was so much to lose?

The note was slipped under his door, followed by the quick knock, as he was making the call to Dameron from his bed. Maybe the man could be competent again. He had to go at this with his usual single-minded fury, although it was elusive. He had to, most of all, keep the emotion from entering his tone as he spoke. He repeated the same words, not able to come up with something better. Today was today again and he realised that the person out to get him — them — was at the office of the DA, Palpatine. He replayed the events as he robotically talked to Dameron.

“Well, I guess there’s a reason that you’re a detective. Yeah, call it in and I’ll be there. Will your hot partner be there?”

He hung up at that point. It was at least set in motion.

He called Rey next, getting out of bed. He had to hear her voice.

“Yeah, Niima?”

“Rey, I need you,” he quickly said. “I need you right now.”
“Wait, what? Kylo? What’s going on?” She was breathing heavily, stopping her run.

“Rey, I…I’ll explain when you get here, okay?” He tried to calm down. “Can I text you my address?”

“Sure, yeah,” she still sounded confused. “I’m coming.”

He texted again and followed the motions of picking up the note with a protective glove and opening it and then calling the office. The team again scrambled to get there and chase any lead, sparked by a change in the pattern. He put it on the table and set the coffee machine on then quickly turned it off, suddenly disgusted at the idea of coffee. Tea. He could make tea. British people drink tea, so she’d like it right? He ignored the sound of the crow hitting the window and went to work, trying to still his shaking hands.

There were two cups of tea on either side of the table when she entered her apartment. He was sitting and looking at the note when she walked in and dropped her bag hard on the floor.

“You look awful,” she frowned. “What’s going on?”

“It’s just…everything is going on,” he sighed, sliding the note over to her. “The killer left a note and I need your help. I already called it in.”

She looked energised for a moment, then sat across from him and started to soak in the mood.

“You had time to make tea?”

“Is it something you like?”

She seemed more and more confused, yet took a small sip from her mug after stirring in to scoops of sugar. “Yeah with sugar. Kylo, can you tell me what’s happening? You’re starting to scare me.”

His shoulders were hunched, he realised. He tried to sit up. He wanted to look more engaged than he felt, but it didn’t seem to work. They were so close yesterday and were sent another roadblock. He didn’t want to burden her with his frustration from the start, although it would help him connect with her. Keeping things to himself was what had doomed them as partners from the start. He took a slow breath and firmed his gaze.

“Rey, I…I’ve been an awful partner to you. I haven’t been fair. You’re a great partner and person and a good cop. I’m in a situation right now that I can’t explain. I just need you to trust me, and believe what I’m saying is actually happening,” he heard his own voice and it sounded so desperate. The previous day of dying such a nonviolent death had shaken him more than he realised.

“You’re my partner,” she started, again. “I want to trust you. Whatever you have to say, I’ll listen. Please, Kylo, tell me what’s happening.”

“It’s the same day for me. I’ve been through today before about a dozen times. We…we keep missing him. Yesterday, we were so close. I’ve seen one of the killer’s faces, Rey. We were so close,” he shook his head. It was never easy to get over the look of obligation in her eyes when she brought up trusting him. She had some faith left in him and he couldn’t figure out where it came from. “It’s all happening over and over again and now we’re getting to him. I need you to help me get through these clues and this…this day. I’m almost exhausted and don’t know how to solve this case and that’s the key — we need to figure out why he wants these kids and why he’s out after me and you.”

She took a long sip from her mug. Sweat was still glistening on her smooth skin. Her previous
words still stuck with him: they were dating, apparently, and she didn’t know it.

“What you just said sounds so unbelievable,” she took a slow breath and he knew what she was going to say next. “But if you think what’s happening has already happened, then I need to believe you. Kylo, I know I didn’t get to pick my partner, but I’m here now.”

He sat back in the kitchen chair and sighed in relief. “You amaze me.”

She blinked. “Thanks?”

“Rey, look, the team will be here soon and we need to explain this to Dameron, but I just need you to follow my lead,” he tried to look more confident, but he was falling down a dark hole of fatigue. Saying the same things all of the time didn’t sit well with him. “You can take over after.”

“I will, don’t worry,” she said, but it seemed like she was holding back.

“Just say what you mean,” he replied. “I trust you.”

She took another long drink from her mug. Her eyes briefly lit up at those three words. She had been waiting for this and he had only let her down over the course of the last few weeks. “I’ve never seen you look like this. You’ve also never spoken to me like this before. It’s like I’m a person to you, suddenly. I’m confused, Kylo, but I believe you.”

He took a deep breath, trying to slow down his thoughts. “I never meant for you to ever feel like something lesser. But I’m very good at messing things up. I made a promise to you on one of the previous todays that we wouldn’t run, that we wouldn’t give up our duty. Otherwise, I’d just take you away from here. We need to solve this but goddammit, I need a good day. It’s selfish and makes me feel awful to think this way right now but I just…I need a break.”

"Why would we need to run?" Again, she blinked at him. He was pushing her too hard and couldn’t stop. “What happens if we run?”

“He follows us,” he started, his tone slow and serious. “But I finally realised that he’s tracking our phones. Maybe my credit card. I don’t know. Rey, I…there’s part of this that I can’t stop. And that’s why I want to run. You die. You die everyday and I’m worried that if we run, something else will happen.”

She looked overwhelmed and pulled her hair out from her ponytail in frustration. “You need to slow down. I die? Everyday?”

The previous day weighed heavy on him as he tried not to rush the feelings. “Yes, I…yesterday we were close and died together. We were in the ADA’s office and someone poisoned us.”

“You can die too? And then what?”

“I just wake up here,” he shrugged. “There's so much about this day that I can't explain. The first few days, it was a minute before six, but we’ve started to buy more time. Some of the days.”

They heard footsteps coming down the hall and he tried to put on his best face; she met his eyes, however, as if to say that he looked too overwhelmed by it all. He nodded and let her take charge of the scene, answering questions as best she could. Dameron was shooting him glances and he nodded to him as if to say that he should stay. Rey still didn’t know that part.

“Captain, I…I think that we’re too close. He’s made it personal to Kylo. We want…or we would like a day off from the rest of the team,” he heard Rey say to Tekka. “Kylo has some leads that we
can chase down that are connected to the note, but we’re…I know that everyone else is exhausted, but they came to his home today, sir, we need time to figure this out.”

If he weren’t so done with today, he would have been more proud of her.

Tekka looked from her to him. “I was beginning to doubt that you two were good partners.”

Rey looked at him over her shoulder and he gave a rough nod before she spoke again. “Well, we are. And I know him.” Not a lie, he thought bitterly. “Can you get another pair on this so we can follow our leads?”

He didn’t deserve her.

The captain eventually agreed, clearing out with the rest of the team except for Dameron. He just slumped on the couch and let her take charge again. He was battling between being angry at himself for being lazy, letting duty sit aside, and tense and exhausted at the depths of the mystery that he found himself in. He closed his eyes and sighed, trying to remember the previous days.

Things had started to blend together in his head and he needed another day to sort them out. Flashes of confronting the real killer started to play out in his mind and he clung to the fantasy.

“Poe, I’m sorry, but apparently there’s something going on today,” she looked at him. “Kylo, tell him.”

The other man looked at him expectantly. “What’s going on?”

“Your crack-whore sister is trying to sell your nephew today, and the killer is using it as a decoy,” he answered, bluntly. “We need you to go get him and call it in so we’re not distracted. But also, I’d really like to know what’s going on with our phones and how he can follow us.”

Dameron’s eyes went wide, and he almost snapped in anger, “What the hell are you talking about?”

“I’ve been through today already. He somehow knows about your nephew and uses it as a distraction from the real kid that he takes. We stopped him from taking the other kid yesterday, but we were poisoned at the courthouse,” he stood up and started to pace.

“Jesus Christ, okay, this goes way up then,” he replied, throwing his hands up. “Okay, so what’s the plan? Try that again and you know, not get poisoned?”

“I…I’m not sure,” he sighed. “This is really starting to get to me.”

“Yeah, you look like shit,” Dameron snorted. “But we’ve got other people to think about. I’ll go get Elias and you guys figure your own shit out. I’m going to take your phones and check them out when I’m back at the lab. If I can get something there, then maybe it will lead us to him. Technology is always messy to deal with and people miss things.”

Kylo thought about the idea. “Take my car, in the garage. I think he’s watching the apartment so maybe he’ll fall for it.”

“Good idea,” Dameron nodded. “Look, I don't really fully buy what you're saying. But you knew about my nephew, so I don't know what to think. I’ll send word to the office so if you call in, you’ll know.”

“He leaves a note at her place,” Kylo added. “That’s what kept us focused before. And why I think he’s got your phone too.”
“Good to know.”

He took their phones, the keys, and left. Rubbing the back of his neck, Kylo moved to sit on the couch again.

“So, do we go for the other boy or not?” Rey asked, moving to sit beside him rather than across from him. “Maybe we should split up.”

“No, never,” he said, maybe a little too quickly, as she sat up a little straighter at his tone. “Sorry.”

“No, it’s okay. I mean, this is all going over my head, but something is obviously happening to you. I’m glad that you trust me enough to let me know about it,” she looked at him with mild impatience, but was able to keep it under control. This wasn’t the first time that she was frustrated with him. “We need to do something, though.”

He thought carefully through their options and made an attempt to speak in the even tones that had won her over on other days. “It usually works when we write everything I know down. There are two paths, well actually three, that we can take: go for Dameron’s nephew, go for the Jinn boy, or just sit aside and see what happens. I’ve also tried to catch him when he dumps the girl, but that blew up in my face.”

She had grabbed her notebook and wrote the four options on separate pieces of paper, laying them out on the coffee table. “So maybe we find a fifth option. What were you saying about the DA’s office?”

“Palpatine seemed to be threatening me on one of the days,” he sighed, trying to recall the words. “He mentioned something about my parents that didn’t sit right with me when I thought about it again. He doesn’t really like me that much. At the time, I didn’t really realise there might be something behind it.”

He looked out at the pieces of paper and was again impressed by how well she could put the pieces together. She wrote DA’s Office on a fifth sheet of paper and ordered them neatly on the table. There were endless ways to spend this day and he started to wonder about other paths. Finding the truck. Finding the accomplice. Stopping the homeless man.

“And then we got poisoned in his office,” she nodded. “So we go there and check out his office without him knowing. I want to save the children, Kylo, but if you’re feeling unbalanced, we should try something new. I have a friend that works security there. We can find her and get in and out while he’s out of the office.”

Shaking his head in agreement, he put his hand on hers. “Rey, I want to save the children too. We keep trying, every day. But I want to know what’s going on in the other parts of the day. We were chasing wrong leads for so long that I’d like to follow this one and see if it’s a dead end or not.”

“Then it’s a plan,” she smiled lightly, looking down at their hands. “It’s a little strange that you keep looking at me like that. And now you’re touching me.”

He quickly moved it. “I…it’s hard that you don’t remember. Everyday, I need to tell you about everything that’s happened. I know things about your past and you don’t really know me. There, we’ve…we’ve been together, before, on other days. Being close to you gets me through the day and then you end up dead and it all starts over again.”

He studied her face, trying to gauge her reaction. Her eyes slightly narrowed as she met his gaze. Her mouth was slightly opened and he remembered how soft and delicate it was. But she was also
determined and strong and never-endingly patient with him. An unsettling idea crossed his mind.

“I shouldn’t have told you about the loop,” he nervously looked out the window. “You wouldn’t have to do all of this and be so confused by how I’m acting. I’m being greedy, always doing this to you. I mean, I basically told you that you’re going to die today and that can’t be easy to think about.”

“No, Kylo, it’s important that you tell me.” Now, she reached for his hand. “It’s a strange burden, but I’m your partner and we haven’t shared much before, so I want to know. Promise you won’t keep this from me.”

“I won’t,” he agreed. “I…do you want to talk about the other part?”

“The us sleeping together part? Yeah, that’s sort of important,” she smiled, jokingly. “Especially the way you keep looking at my mouth.”

He blushed and laughed a little. It was a lighter moment in a very tense day and he clung to those memories. There was a long pause and he knew what was coming.

“So, I must have told you about when I was…attacked,” she sighed, turning serious again. He nodded and she bit her lip. “It’s something I live with, Kylo, and it’s fine now.”

“You’re not damaged or broken,” he answered. “Rey, I know that it’s unfair that you don’t remember and I do. The first time we slept together was unforgettable, but there’s a part of it that makes me regret how I treated you. I was too aggressive and maybe it wasn’t something you wanted. I want to take it back.”

“But that didn’t happen today.” She shook her head. “Don’t think too much about it. But I’m glad you told me.”

“I try not to keep things from you,” he squeezed her hand. “You said that we were dating on one of the other days.”

This made her grin, breaking the tension. “Maybe we should go on a real date one of these days. It would be strange, but this is already beyond strange.”

He smiled at the thought. “Another day. But first, today. Let’s get ready and find your friend at the courthouse. You seem to know so many more people than I do.”

“What do you mean?”

“You know the paperboy downstairs, you have your friend Maz.”

“You met Maz?”

“Yeah we…we used her apartment once.”

She flushed a little at his tone. “Part of me has a hard time believing that this is happening to you. But you’re really different. The way you talk to me, the way you’re acting…any other day, I’d just think that you’ve gone insane.”

“When this is over, you can commit me.”

She reached up to tuck a hair behind his ear, a gesture he was finding more and more endearing. “I might just have to join you.”
He reached over to kiss her, drawing her closer. She felt tense, then just seemed to accept it. The gentle touches drew her closer as he briefly deepened the kiss, feeling her tense before giving in. He didn’t want it to stop, to leave her mouth, but he had to. Moving away, he met her eyes.

“Rey, I…these days are so hard.” He shook his head. “Is it okay if I kiss you again?”

She sat back and licked her lips. “I…kiss me again, and I’ll decide if it’s okay.”

He did. He reached for her, gripping the bare part of her lower back, the sweat-covered part that always caught his eyes. His hands felt desperate, knowing her body now. This time, she responded, gripping at his arms and shifting onto his lap. Her body was tense and tasted like dried sweat. Her work-out clothes were far more enjoyable than her trousers, but not as freeing as when she was unclothed.

He undid her ponytail and kissed down her neck. It was still early, but they were on a clock. He tried to push the growing pressure to act away by focusing on how she was moving and how she felt. She was making soft, small noises as he touched her hips, trying to bring her closer.

“This has…messed with my head,” she smirked, pulling back. “I never thought I would enjoy kissing you. What am I even doing?”

“There’s other things you like too,” he replied, smoothing his hand across her stomach. He looked up at her and saw lingering confusion crease her brow.

“This is all so messed up. I…I’ve always been attracted to you and it’s been so long since someone has looked at me the way that you do,” she shook her head, shifting her weight on his lap. It instantly drove his need into overdrive. “Do you really want me?”

“Yes, Rey, always.”

She licked her lips. “Will it help…would it help you if we had time for a shower together?”

“Only if you’re sure,” he traced the edge of the elastic of her pants. “You’re so beautiful and I want to make you feel that way. Always. Not just today. Forever.” The words left his mouth without the tremble that he felt rising in his chest.

“Kylo, when you called me this morning, I never thought that something like this would happen. I had a crush on you from the start and, well, that went away, but it’s hard to resist you,” she smirked, blushing, as he knowingly nodded. “We’ll solve this together. It would be good not to die too.”

“Come here,” he pulled her down into another kiss. “One day, I’ll stop it. I have to. I need you too much.”

“Show me.”

He lifted her off the couch, a little less elegantly than he imagined, but she didn’t object. Her legs wrapped around his back as he guided them to the washroom. Kissing her the entire time, he managed to find the door. He wondered why she was so willing this morning and then imagined being in the same spot. Someone was desperate and in pain; his previous self wouldn’t have picked up on it but now, after her help, he would have zeroed in on the need to help. He’d pushed her into an awkward situation and she seemed like she wanted to help him get release and to focus. But he didn’t want her to do this just because of him and his unusual, to say the least, problem. He shouldn’t be putting her in this type of situation. She might just be doing this out of their partnership. His selfishness would always burn them.
He finally set her down on the worn bathroom rug and reached for her top, but paused. “I shouldn’t be pushing you like this again.”

She shook her head. “Kylo, you need it. And I…it’s been a hard few weeks. Just…fuck me. I’m tired of thinking about dead kids. Make me feel something good.”

She needed him too. The thought went straight to his cock, doing away with his nagging mind. He pressed his mouth to hers again and she raised her arms and he pulled off her sports bra. Her hands worked at his buttons of his shirt and things were happening too slow, suddenly. Revealing her breasts, he was again lost in how she trusted him. Gently, he cupped her face.

“What am I going to do without you?”

“You keep going,” she shook her head. “That’s the only answer. I still don’t understand all of this, but if we can help one another out right now, that would be a good thing.”

He kissed her gently again as the rest of their clothes were removed by nervous hands. She looked at his body with a small grin and he smiled back. They fit together and he wanted to show her again how he could love her, and make her cry out. He hugged her lightly, feeling her entire body against his.

“How are you doing this?” She asked, running her hands up his chest.

“What?”

“Go from looking at me like you hate me yesterday to looking at me like I’m something worthwhile today?” She traced her hands across his muscled stomach and looked back at him.

“I told you,” he whispered. “I know you. I know your body. I love your body. But the person you are is what I really want.”

“Who are you and what have you done with my partner?” She said with a small laugh. His hands were moving down her body and found her wet entrance and she shuddered as his thumb found her clit. He loved making her shiver. Her body matched his, soft where he was hard. She gently took his erection in her hand and he groaned at the gentle, careful strokes.

He gently moved her aside to turn on the water and helped her over the edge of the tub. He always meant to renovate, but the idea of her being held against him in the bath made him get lost in the fact that there must be a tomorrow at some point.

Under the warm, running water, he ran his hands tenderly down her sides after brushing his fingertips against her nipples, before moving to press his mouth to them. Swirling his tongue, he found her clit again with his hand and heard her breathing getting quicker.

She closed her eyes, trying to find his cock again with one hand; the other was tangled in his hair. She wanted him and wasn’t afraid; it amazed him. It would always be the first time for her and he was almost jealous. These touches and sensations would always be with her and he would always want it to be perfect.

“Please, Kylo, I need you.”

She panted, gently guiding his hand away. She set her foot on the edge of the tub and met his eyes. The steam of the washroom washed over them. She was wet, warm, and God, why would she want him? She gripped his hips, and brought him closer, her eyes darkening. He took her strong thigh and lifted it, to guide himself inside of her waiting hole. She gasped at the initial contact of the tip
of his cock, and tensed against him. Taking deep breaths she seemed to be overwhelmed. Closing her eyes, she set her head back.

“God, Kylo, it’s been so long for me.”

“It’s okay,” he had to fight against his urge to be deeper and fully feel her tautness again. Kissing her gently, he slowly thrust forward, slowly entering her fully. She let out a small intake of breath, shifting her hips to roll against him. “Yes, Rey, yes.”

Slowly, he started thrusting into her, gradually quickening his pace. He held her leg, helping support her. He tried to touch and kiss and taste her everywhere that he could. She wanted this. Sliding in and out of her, he felt her tightness but also her want. But still, in her mind, he was the jerk from yesterday and yet, here she was willingly let him fuck her. He kept forgetting that she had lived through the weeks of the case without any real kindness from him. She must have been so alone. He could make her feel something real today.

With his free hand, he reached down and started to massage her clit as he quickened the pace of his thrusts. Be here, with her, his mind screamed at him. Make this about her.

She shuddered lightly, gripping at his shoulders. Her body tightened around him and she lightly gasped and her leg stiffened. He wanted to go on longer, but the sound and feel of her orgasm pushed him over the edge. The pressure built and he came without warning her, shifting his hand to grab her ass. He let out a low cry against her shoulder, not able to stop it before it slipped out. She clung to his back, whimpering.

Her eyes locked on his as the hand on her thigh slipped slightly. Her feet returned to the bottom of the tub. She kissed the palm of his hand and he basked in the sensation of the afterglow, although it brought out emotions that he wasn’t expecting.

“You…you really are different,” she said slowly, slowly moving away. He instantly missed her warmth. “Kylo, that was amazing.”

He stepped back from her to be under the stream of the water, before looking at her again. “Yes, Rey. I feel…I feel so much for you. You have no idea.”

“I’m beginning to,” she murmured. “If this really is happening, and you wake up in the same day again, don’t forget what you’ve given me.”

He kissed her lightly before nodding. “I don’t deserve you.”

They finished showering in relative silence, exchanging careful touches as they finished and got ready for the long day ahead. Coming together so quickly had put him in a better, more centred mood but it still stirred the underlying emotions within him. Dressed and ready, they quickly ran through the short plan that they had made and were about to leave to catch a cab to try to unravel this part of the day. Standing by the door, he was almost reluctant to open it and step out into the world.

“Kylo, it will be okay. The way that you’re acting…you’re still worried about what you think is going to happen,” she said, gently putting her hand on his arm. “Today doesn’t have to be like the other days.”

“I want it to be different. The good days are when we actually get somewhere,” he reached down to kiss her. “Are you ready?”

“Maybe we’ll get lucky today.”
The taxi ride across town gave them time to think through what they had laid out. He didn’t want to spend that much time at the DA’s office, but they needed to give it a try. They found Rey’s friend downstairs, just inside of the courthouse. She was talking to a colleague but waved when she spotted them.

“Hey! Rey, nice to see you!” The young woman looked overly happy to see them. “Are you Kylo, I don’t think we’ve met?”

“No, not today.”

She looked confused and turned back to Rey. “Look, Rose, we need a big, big favour. It’s about the case with the murdered children. Can we talk somewhere private?”

“Yeah, sure,” she nodded. “We’ll go to the little office that they’ve got us crammed into.”

The day was going quickly and the shower sex had only temporarily put him back in the present. Now, they were in a new place, dealing with a new situation. One that he had to remember. It was a very small space, filled with paperwork and empty donut boxes. He studied the various schedules and information pinned to the wall. There must be more things that he was missing and he was trying to find anything that might lead him somewhere. Rey and Rose were chatting, and Rey was starting to explain the plan and what they needed. Next to a yellowed piece of paper was an election pamphlet. It was an election year, he vaguely remembered, and Palpatine was running for re-election. That’s why he had been skulking around so much and had been putting pressure on the team to solve the case. He filed that part away as a potential clue and turned back to the young women.

“So you can get us in there?” Rey asked, looking at her friend firmly.

“I mean, yeah Rey, I can but I might lose my job if we get caught. What are you guys looking for?” Rose looked from one to the other and frowned.

“Something, anything,” he said, and then quickly added. “We’re trying to rule him out.”

He could see Rose rolling the thought around in her mind and then she sighed. “Well, the pay is crap here, so maybe I don’t need this job. Here’s what we’ll do, okay? I’ll take you guys up the floor that his office is on and you guys wait in the stairwell. There’s a camera blind spot there that we’ve never been able to fix. People use it as a make-out spot all the time and it’s super annoying.”

“Okay, and then what?” Rey asked, trying to get her to get back on topic.

“I’ll set off the fire alarm. Everyone will clear out. With all the shootings and everything with the kids, everyone is super nervous,” she shrugged. “Everyone will clear out.”

She stood up, crossing the room to a small box of keys. “I shouldn’t be taking this, but here’s the skeleton key. Gets you in everywhere, even his office. He hates that the janitors go in there and tried to get it taken away.”

“Rose, I’ll never be able to repay you,” Rey said, thoughtfully.

“If it’s for those kids then I want to help.”

They briefly hugged and she led them to the stairwell.

“If anyone walks by, just pretend to be making out. No one will notice,” Rose joked and he saw Rey slightly stiffen. “You should be able to find his office fairly easily. Just get out as soon as you
can. We have to sweep the building when the alarm goes off. I’ll try to be the one to check the room but I can’t guarantee it.”

“Sure, okay,” Rey answered for them.

“It’ll happen in ten minutes. Be ready,”

And she left them. They climbed the stairs in silence, trying to prepare for anyone to recognise them. They didn’t pass by anyone that they knew and were finally in the hiding spot. He put his hands on her hips and pulled her close. She briefly resisted, but rolled her eyes and stepped into his arms.

“You’re actually going to take that seriously?” She whispered as he kissed her forehead.

“Any chance I have to hold you today, I’m going to take.”

She managed to smile, and then turned back to the task at hand. “Next time, we won’t have to bother Rose. We know this spot now and where the key is.”

“Yeah, that’s…that’s good,” he felt his spirits sag again at the thought of the day ending any other way than her being alive and the killer caught. “I really hope this works.”

“Me too.”

The lingering silence between them was broken by the blaring alarm. He pulled her into a kiss when he heard the emergency door opening and people started to clear past them. A few people scoffed at them, but still kept walking. They waited a couple more minutes, after the throng of people had passed, and moved into the hallway. Finding the man’s office, Kylo kept sweeping the hallway as Rey opened the oppressive-looking door. Unlike Holdo’s office, connected to the side, which was swamped with paperwork, his office was the opposite: pristine shelves and tidied piles. They each took a corner of the room and swept towards the middle, trying to find anything that would get them somewhere. He moved behind the desk; each drawer was locked except for the top one, which had clearly been closed in the haste of the evacuation.

A notebook sat at the top and he grabbed it, shoving it into his jacket pocket. He didn’t want to waste time looking now. Rey was across the room, looking through the line of suits that were hanging on a clothes rack.

“Anything?” She hissed. It was hard to hear her over the alarm. The tempo of the alarm increased. That meant the security team would be coming by soon and he quickly looked through the drawer again. There was a neatly folded map in the corner and he grabbed that too.

“Yeah, I think so. Let’s…”

The door handle turning interrupted him. He dove behind the desk and Rey crouched behind an ornate chair in the corner. They would be hidden only if the person didn’t step further into the room. He tried to control his breathing when he heard the voice.

“Yeah, it’s clear.”

Rose.

When the door shut, he quickly hurried over to Rey.

“Come on, let’s go,” he said, quietly grabbing her arm. “I think I’ve found everything that’s in the
open. The other drawers are locked.”

They quickly hurried from the room, sweeping the hallway before heading down the same stairwell.

That’s where Kylo saw him: the redheaded man. He was coming up the stairs, looking annoyed, and they made brief eye contact. Kylo steeled his face and forced a light nod. He evidently didn’t know that he knew him. Not today. He didn’t recognise them when they weren’t in a specific place, where he was told that they would be. But now, they couldn’t let him know. They had to let him go here and now, but knew what he looked like more.

They passed by and the man snidely made a comment.

“Shouldn’t everyone have been evacuated?” He asked as they passed.

“We were just a little…busy in the blind spot,” Rey shot back, wiping the corner of her mouth then running her hand across Kylo’s back.

He rolled his eyes and mumbled something about lousy breeders and hurried up the stairs, slamming through the fourth floor door in a rage.

Kylo’s breathing got heavier and heavier when he was out of sight. Rey shook his shoulder.

“That was him.” Kylo hissed. “That was the accomplice.”

“What? Kylo, we have to go get him! Did he recognise us?”

“No, he…he doesn’t know us on sight. Apparently.” He let the realisation soak in. Why wouldn’t the killer show him their pictures? Was he the one following him? Was there another one?

Rey was halfway up the stairs and he had to scramble to grab her. “No, we need to go. If he’s here, then we can get to the park. Come on.”

She reluctantly followed him down the stairs. He hailed a cab, still trying to digest the meeting. It must be the DA, Palpatine. He needed to figure out the few clues they’d found. He checked his watch. They could get to the park first, especially if he was there.

“Hey look at this,” he handed her the map.

She unfolded it and frowned. “It’s just a tourist map of Lower Manhattan.”

He was trying to get the light to hit the angle on the notepad. There was something that had been written on the previous sheet and he didn’t have a pencil. He tucked it back into his pocket in frustration. “Is there anything written on it.”

She scanned the paper. “There’s a mark here.”

There was only one thing circled on the map.

“That’s St. Patrick’s,” he narrowed his eyes.

“The cathedral?”

“Yeah.”

“Should we go there?”
He shook his head. “Park first.”

They rolled up to the area that he remembered them being at, on the zoo side, and he followed her out of the car. He checked his watch. There was still time.

He slowed his breathing, realising he was letting panic and impulse take over. They were on the same path. The boy should again show up soon. He wanted to pace but forced himself to stand still. Rey stood beside him, scanning for any pair of parents with their child.

“It has to be Palpatine,” he said, lowly. “If we don’t get him today, we’ll get him tomorrow and this will be over.”

She gave him a long look and then a bit of a smile. There was no way he was going to go chasing anyone onto the bridge today. He spotted the family and there was no man in black in sight. His heart was beating in his ears; they were so close.

“Mr and Mrs Jinn?” He said, forcing an even tone.

They both looked shocked. “Yes, what’s going on?”

He showed them his badge, still waiting for someone to emerge out of nowhere.

Rey introduced them and quickly explained what was happening. “We have a credible threat in this park by the child abductor. We’re sorry to ruin your afternoon, but may we walk you to your car?”

The mother gripped her son’s hand. “What? We didn’t hear anything on the news?”

“Yes, we have evidence to think so,” Kylo stepped closer, “we’ll take you to your car and then it’s a very good idea that you go straight home and lock your door.”

They were on either side of the family, carefully trailing through the park, on edge. The boy still hadn’t realised what was going on was just excited to see real police officers with guns. Kylo kept his eyes on Rey, still not trusting how this day was unfolding.

Reaching the car, he was nearly to the point of screaming. Nothing was happening. He wasn’t there. This had never happened before. He always showed up.

As they drove away, Rey took his hand. “We saved him.”

“We saved him and have a suspect,” he added. “I don’t like being in the open.”

“He must be following our phones,” she shook her head. “Should we check in with Poe, back at the station?”

He blinked. “Yeah, let’s head back there. We might be able to draw him to us.”

She nodded. “Hey, look at me.”

He turned to face her. “I don’t know how to think. It’s working.”

She leaned up and kissed the corner of his mouth. “Come on, let’s go.”

The taxi ride was quiet. She gripped his hand and he jumped at every truck that came into view. This was the time he was supposed to encounter the homeless man. Then they would take him back to the station. That part of the day would repeat itself like it was supposed to. They didn’t have the homeless man, Snoke, but he could handle that part.
He was actually surprised to arrive in one piece. Avoiding their desks and the others, they went to the lab, taking back hallways. He still let Rey lead, trailing behind her in case someone came up from behind. How did the redheaded man not recognise them?

Knocking on the door to the small office, Dameron instantly rose to greet them.

“Holy shit, you’re back,” he quickly said. “Come in, we’ll shut the door.”

Alone in the small lab office, Dameron made them sit down. Kylo was still agitated but they were safe there.

“Has anything strange happened here?” Rey asked. “We think we found him, Poe. We think it’s the DA.”

“We found this in his office,” Kylo produced the notepad and the map.

“Wow, hell, shit, okay,” the other man shook his head, taking the paper to look at it. “It’s been super fucked here. He’s been here so much, you have no idea. I dropped off Elias at my sister’s ex’s and he’s safe and fine. I don’t know how to thank you about that part, you know? What else happened here, um, the captain is losing his mind. There’ve been tons of other bluff calls about missing kids and everyone is scrambling.”

“We saved the one he was supposed to take,” Kylo said. “And we saw the other suspect in the stairwell of the courthouse.”

“I don’t know why I’m so excited about this, but whatever crazy leads you guys are chasing, I’m there with you,” Dameron nodded. “But I don’t think you should let them know you’re back. Maybe just go home and leave your phones here?”

Kylo ran a hand through his hair. “It’s…this might be it. We know who he is. If Rey can live past midnight, we’ll do a real investigation tomorrow and figure out why and how he’s doing all this.”

Dameron leaned back in his chair. “Real police work instead of chasing ghosts.”

Exhaustion overtook him now that he had stopped moving. Was it really over?

“I don’t want to be out on the street again,” he said quickly. “There’re too many things that can and will go wrong.”

“So stay here? Come on, I’ll show you the crash room,” he stood, leading them out and down the hallway. There were two small bunks set up in a storeroom that was still in use, but most of the things stacked in the corners. He just wanted to sleep at that point and wake up and it be something different.

“Thank you for believing me,” Kylo told the other man. “Your family shouldn’t be wrapped up in this.”

Dameron shrugged. “Come on, it’s not everyday I get to play the television-style CSI. I’m going to head downstairs and snoop around a bit. But I’ll be back.”

He closed the door and Rey let out a long and deep sigh.

“We did it.”

He looked at his watch. They had less than ten hours left to keep her alive. “It’s not over yet.”
Sitting up on the bed, resting his back against the wall, he finally took a deep breath. She curled up next to him, slipping under his arm.

“He’s shot up the station before, and drove a truck into it,” Kylo whispered after pressing a kiss to her forehead. “I’m just waiting for that.”

“He thinks we’re here but knows we’re not. That must be driving him insane,” she exhaled, resting her head on his chest.

He nodded, feeling so tired but not able to relax and let himself sleep. He could force himself to stay awake until midnight to keep her with him.

“You should sleep,” he smoothed her hair.

“No, I want to spend more time with you,” she seemed to be enjoying touching him, running her hand up his leg. “Kylo, what we shared this morning was…that was really nice.”

He managed a small laugh. “Yeah, I…Rey I know that this is all going very fast for you, but it meant a lot to me and still means a lot to me that you can always trust me. That you do always trust me, even after how shitty I’ve been to you.

“It’s like…I still can’t figure out how you can look at me and it seems like you know me. I guess that’s why I trust you,” she sat up to meet his eyes as she spoke.

“You’re the only good thing about today,” he smiled. “I can’t believe I’ve wasted so much time not knowing you.”

“Well, you have today.”

He kissed her gently, just trying to focus on the moment. He kept waiting for a bomb to go off or for someone to come in shooting. But it didn’t happen. An hour went by before Dameron joined them.

“Okay, the captain is pissed and the DA took off around noon, but he’s been breathing down our necks all morning. He wanted to know where you two are. I overheard that some family called in to thank some officers for protecting their son. That was you guys right?” He handed them a bottle of sealed water. Kylo inspected it carefully before opening it to take a drink. The cap snapped off and he let part of his fear go. He handed it to his partner yet was still suspicious of the potential of being poisoned.

“What did you tell him?”

He shrugged. “That I hadn’t heard from you guys. Your phones are ringing like crazy and driving everyone nuts. I’m going to take a look at them now to see what I can find out from the tracker or whatever.”

“Just…just be careful.”

Alone again, he was finally starting to feel more at ease with what was happening. They did their jobs. This wasn’t hiding; this was for preservation. He finally convinced Rey to sleep and she stretched out, her head in his lap. She slept quietly and he kept a firm watch on the door. He’d get through this day. He had to. He couldn’t rest and just slipped in and out of the memories of previous days.

It was nearly evening when Poe returned again, looking pale with red-rimmed eyes. He woke Rey
and she looked confused before she noticed the other man. They both stood in question and he waved a tired hand.

“Some guy just ugh… blew up a school. Like two hours ago when the bell rang. I had to go out to the scene and it was…it’s not good. Some homeless dude walked in and just poof, blew it up,” he ran an exhausted hand over his face. “We’re all hands on deck down there, and I don’t know what to tell you guys.”

Kylo’s heart sank. “We have to help. But I don’t want to, dammit.”

Rey gripped his hand. “Dameron, how many?”

“Fifteen kids, two teachers. Dozens of parents and kids injured.”

“Dammit.” He swore again.

“What do we do?” She asked.

Reluctantly, he spoke. “Cops first.”

There were people scrambling everywhere when they emerged from their hiding spot. Mundi saw them and instantly swore, demanding to know where they’ve been.

“We…we thought we had a lead,” Kylo replied with exhaustion.

“This is a major escalation so I think that you must have pissed him off with whatever you two did,” he glared. “They’re still picking through the rubble.”

“Shit,” Rey actually swore.

“Should we go?” Kylo asked, trying to put duty before her and was failing.

“We’ve got a witness in interview one. If you feel like being a part of this investigation again, you can join the captain in talking to him,” the other man flatly said.

They nodded and went to the room and froze. Sitting in the chair, opposite the captain, was the redheaded man.

“He’s playing with us,” Kylo mumbled. “Let’s get to the bottom of this.”

He knocked on the glass and the captain rose to open the door.

“Just where in the hell have you been,” he said in a hushed tone.

“We’re here now,” Kylo replied, his eyes panning to the ‘witness.’ “But we want to talk to him.”

The captain let them in, joining them across the table. The other man’s eyes got wide and he jumped to his feet.

“It was you,” his tone was both angry and surprised. “You were at the courthouse!”

The captain looked at them in confusion but didn’t say anything.

“Yes, and we’re closing in on you and your partner,” Rey spoke up, her tone level and certain. “Tell us who our mutual friend is.”
“You’ll never get that out of me,” he glared at them. “He said he knew everything but he didn’t know this. What are you doing?”

“We just know,” Kylo said, flatly. “Now sit down.”

They got his name out of him, Hux, but not much more. He just kept repeating the same lines. Kylo got frustrated but knew that they wouldn’t get anywhere. It was nearly 9 p.m. when they gave up and let the others try. The captain tried to bring them back to their desks, but they paused in the hallway. Kylo wanted to go back to his hiding place.

“I am expecting a very, very detailed report about whatever you two were up to today,” he said, sternly. “Bombing a school, the DA is not happy right now. This is an election year and it’s up to us to stop the bleeding.”

Kylo tensed. “Is he here?”

The captain shook his head. “He finally stopped asking where you were and left hours ago.”

Relaxing slightly, Kylo rubbed the back of his neck. “Look captain…”

“No right now, Ren,” Tekka waved them off. “You have a mess to clean up tomorrow. Go home.”

They didn’t go home though. They returned to Poe’s little room, but he was nowhere to be found. They let themselves in and sat down heavily on the bed.

“We just ended up killing more people,” Rey mumbled, dejected. “We can’t bring them back.”

He rubbed his eyes. “I’m so sorry Rey. This…I thought we were close.”

He reached for her and she shook her head, avoiding his touch. “Is this what happens when we’re together? More people die? We try to save them and he attacks a school? What if this ends the loop? Those poor, poor children.”

“I know, I know.”

She cried lightly, still not letting him soothe her. “I can’t…I can’t be around you right now.”

“Rey…”

“Just let me be alone! He’s not here and he’s not going to get me!” She quickly opened the door and he wanted to follow her. He needed to protect her. Anyone could be the third accomplice. He sat down heavily on the bed and realised that a day like today couldn’t happen again. They had enough pieces to get their main suspect. He waited fifteen-panicked minutes before stalking out to try to find her. He needed to talk to her and was sure that he could reason with her that it would be worth it in the end. When he glanced down the hallway leading to the stairwell, he was sure he was seeing things when he saw a dark shadow out of the corner of his eye. He shook his head, knowing that it wasn’t possible.

He stalked further, not knowing where to go.

“She’s on the roof!” Dameron called when he heard his footsteps coming towards the lab. “Wouldn’t let me talk to her!”

With heavy steps, he climbed the stairs up to the roof. Exiting into the night, he took in the cool air. No wonder she went there. To his surprise, she was alone, sitting on the ground across the...
small expanse of the accessible part of the roof with her back to the low wall. The lights were low but he could see that her eyes were closed and her head was resting against the rough wall.

“Hey.” He called.

She didn’t answer. Part of him really could understand. She just wanted to save the children and the city and he was just chasing her and his heart.

“Hey, Rey?” He said again, crossing the distance to her. Tears were still glistening on her cheeks in the soft glow from the emergency light.

He shook her arm, fear starting to climb up his throat.

The second he moved her, she slumped to the side. Angry red marks stained her elegant throat. Numb, he sat down next to her and just pulled her dead form to him. He’d got her again. He wasn’t in time.

“You can’t stop this.” The disguised voice said behind him, shoes crunching the gravel as he appeared from around the corner of the door. So there was a third one. This one was slightly shorter than the man they had in the interview room. “He won’t let you.”

The man turned and left, and he let him.

Would he ever be able to let her go?

He sat there for an hour, feeling her get colder. Maybe he needed to pull away from her. They could work as partners if he didn’t put so many feelings into it. Tears sprung to his eyes as he kissed her forehead.

“I love you,” he whispered. “I…I’m sorry. I love you so much and I’ll make it up to you, I promise.”

He left her there, moving back down the stairs, feeling numb.

“She okay?” Poe asked when he reached the lab.

“Oh, she’s dead, where’s the notebook? I want to look at it.”

Dameron started, gasping and ready to argue, but then sat down heavily when he saw his eyes.

“What the fuck, Kylo?”

He could only emotionlessly shrug. “What did you find out about the notebook?”

“Your partner is dead and you’re…you’re asking about the notebook?” Dameron took an exasperated breath. “Well, okay, yeah. Sure. Today is today and tomorrow doesn’t exist. Fine. The notebook matches the two notes we’ve found. The last thing he wrote, we haven’t found.”

“What does it say?”

Dameron moved him over to a small table. They’d made an impression of the paper, sketching over the written words from the previous sheet of paper. This wasn’t the note that the homeless man gave him, reading She’s next. If you don’t decide. Instead, new words were etched on the page.

*You caused this. But you can’t stop it without me. She’ll never live, Ben. She never has.*

He blinked blankly at the sentences. “What does that mean?”
“Fuck if I know, it’s your messed up case,” Dameron shook his head. “Kylo, if this…if this day does happen again tomorrow, what are you going to do?”

“Be a cop and do my job, like she would want me to,” he wiped his eyes. “Follow the clues and the leads. Get this monster. If this is going to work, I’m going to need more help. I’m probably going to ask you again. But I can’t avoid working with her; she’s too smart and can see the pieces that I can’t. But I still need to save her but I have to stop…I have to stop being in love with her.”


He shrugged, checking the time. “I’m going to go back to the roof. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He started to fall asleep at her side, still holding her and trying to let go of his feelings that tied them together. Looking at his watch, the clock ticked over to 1.59.

Chapter End Notes

This is getting to be quite long and complicated so I apologize in advance for plot "conveniences" that will end up going and cleaning up, same as typos and grammar mistakes. I can't leave anything alone...again thanks for the comments and kudos! :)
Day 13

Chapter Summary

Kylo tries to push Rey away, afraid of where his feelings are leading him. But he still tries to form a team to confront the DA, Palpatine. Please read the tags for warnings.

Day 13

Kylo Ren woke up. Shiver, jolt. He still felt cold from the time that he had spent beside her, holding her. It was 5.52. So much extra time, but none of the bright spots from the previous days would be there to lift his spirits. He had to remember what he could lose as the case was starting to fall through his fingers. Her anger at their failure was something he deserved. He had to be close to her without getting even closer. He had to tell her about the other days and carefully leave out the parts that made any of this worth it. Dammit, how was he going to do that?

Okay, the paperboy. He couldn’t avoid the two other initial and less harmful accomplices: first, the paperboy and then the homeless man. The difference today would be that hopefully he could get Finn on their side. He was across the floor of his apartment when the radio went off.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

Again, he opened the door to meet the other man before he could leave the note or knock.

“Hello, Finn.”

He looked at him with wide eyes. “You actually know my name? How did you know I would be out here, man?”

“Come inside. I’ve got some calls to make.”

He retrieved the note from Finn’s hand and set it aside. Everything felt heavier than other days and he needed to shake off the feeling. It was like déjà vu but worse; there were things he could do to change it but also couldn’t. Sighing, he called Dameron as Finn wandered into his kitchen with tense shoulders. Was he really the right person to bring in on this? He’s the only one that had had an interaction with one of the suspects so that had to count for something.

Again, he carefully exchanged the same words and heard the surprise in the other man’s voice when he brought up the clue, his nephew, and the other small details he could reveal. If the other days had shown anything, it’s that he sympathized with the situation. He could be annoying, but he seemed to at least accept the fact that something odd was happening.

Next, he made a much more difficult phone call.

“Yeah, Niima?”

“Hi, it’s me,” a long pause. Just live; just one day. As he spoke, he realized how pleading he
“Look Rey, I need you to come by here. I’ve got a lead and something really important to tell you. Can you come by?”

“Kylo, what’s wrong? Yes, of course. I’ll be right there. Just send me your address.” She sounded confused, but just hearing her voice again made him doubt his resolve.

He shook off the feeling and finally called in the team. He decided that he had to keep following the same steps. There were just some things that the killer seemed to think would continue to happen, despite how many times he changed the day. It was all set in motion as the crow hit his window. Finn jumped but he didn’t react.

“What’s going on here?” Finn asked, removing his gloves. “Why did that guy in black want me to give you that note? How did you know about the note?”

“Finn, look, I know this is going to sound really, really strange. I just need you to be patient and wait until Rey gets here. When the rest of the team gets here, say that you saw the man leaving the note and came up to tell me, since it was out of the ordinary. Describe what you saw. I can’t let them take you because there are too many things that happen today,” he shook his head, lost in a memory. “I thought Rey and I could handle it alone at first but now…it all goes to hell if I don’t have more help.”

The other man slowly sat down. “Well, can you at least make some coffee?”

“You’ll get tea.”

Rey came jogging up to his door and deposited her bag. She looked from Finn to Kylo and shook her head, baffled. It hurt to look at her and know that he couldn’t tell her anything about what they had shared. She would get too close and the killer was using that against him. He’d have to lie to her and that made him ache even more. He’d have to think on his feet and fill in the spots that were intimate and beautiful to him, but she could never know. If he could do it today, it would get easier tomorrow.

“What’s happening? You’re starting to scare me.” She sat down, accepting the mug and the sugar. “Since when do you know what I like?”

“Look, the team will be here soon so we don’t have much time,” he paused, taking a long drink from his mug. It burnt as it went down. “Rey, this is the thirteenth time I’ve woken up on September 24th. Every day, the same things keep happening and we keep trying to change them. It’s the same day for me but no one else except for the killer seems to know that it’s all the same. Yesterday, the other day, we got close. The DA is involved and we were close to getting him.”

He focused on her reaction. Finn just gawked at them with a dumb look on his face.

“Rey, I know I haven’t been the best partner. I never really tried to be. But everyday, every today, you amaze me with how you work and how you react to all of this. We…we’re,” he wanted to say
lovers but held back, “We’re friends now. Real partners now. I know that you don’t remember any of this, but I need you. I need you to trust me so we can finally catch him. I need you to help me get through these clues and this…this day. But we also need Finn and Dameron. I’m so tired and don’t know how to solve this case and that’s the key — we need to figure out why he wants these kids and why he’s out after me and you.”

It was easy to repeat the last part from the previous day. Her eyes got wide and she leaned forward, putting her elbows on the table.

“What you just said sounds so unbelievable,” she took a slow breath and he knew what she was going to say next. “But if you think what’s happening has already happened, then I need to believe you. Kylo, I know I didn’t get to pick my partner, but I’m here now.”

Again, he sighed in relief. “You amaze me.”

Finn just blinked. “You actually believe all this? He’s insane, Rey. He’s just insane.”

“I’ve never seen him like this before,” she looked from her friend back to her partner. “You’ve also never spoken to me like this before. It’s like I’m a person to you, suddenly. I’m confused, Kylo, but I believe you.”

“Rey, look, the team will be here soon and we need to explain this to Dameron, but I just need you to follow my lead,” he again tried to fake confidence, but also avoid getting drawn into her eyes. She was so desperate to be wanted by him and accepted him with only small words of kindness; he really had been a terrible partner. “I need you to be with us on this too, Finn.”

“I guess…I guess if Rey believes you, I can play along.” He shrugged. “If he knows where you live, that must freak you out.”

“Yes, if he’s after you — after us — why call the team here?” Rey furrowed her brow. “What happens if we run?”

“He follows us,” he started again. “But he’s tracking our phones. Yesterday, we tricked him. Dameron took our phones and that made him really angry. We can’t try that again because if he is in the loop, he’ll think we’ll try it again. I still don’t know what he knows. But Rey, I…there’s another part of this that I can’t stop. You die. You die every day. I don’t…I don’t want to overwhelm you but…”

She looked stunned. “You need to slow down. I die? Every day? All of the…times that’s this has been repeated?”

Finn’s eyes were wide and Kylo regretted having to share that part with him but if she really were his friend, he would want to protect her too.

“Yes, and some days I die too. But always with you.”

“You can die too? And then what?”

“I just wake up here,” he tried not to sound bitter. “The first few days it was a minute before six, but we’ve started to buy more time. That’s how I’m able to catch Finn some days.”

The familiar tempo of footsteps down the hall started to draw closer and he looked at both of them with a quick nod. They exchanged it, but still looked at him with quiet disbelief.

The scene played out slightly differently this time. Finn was a witness and not a suspect. They said
that they would question him here, but that the note should go to the lab. Dameron looked more
intrigued than suspicious. The captain seemed to again be impressed by his attitude.

“We have a lead here,” he said to his detectives. “I want you two to follow it however you think
you should. You seem to have a connection to him and he knows where you live. I would suggest
not staying here tonight.”

The team cleared out and now, instead of three people in his apartment, he had four, including
himself. They could make this work with four.

“Yeah, hey Poe Dameron, forensics tech,” he reached out to shake Finn’s hand. “Do you have any
idea what’s going on?”

“Finn,” he shook his head. “And no.”

“Okay, spill.”

Kylo guided them to the couches and had to keep from wincing when Rey sat next to him, looking
at him with bright eyes. He always wondered how she could believe him. She was so warm and
close. It would be so easy just to fall back into her and just let his feelings continue to grow. Again,
he pushed them down, trying to focus on the case. He had a team now and they were looking at
him expectantly.

“It’s like I said on the phone, your sister is going to try to sell your nephew for drug money today.
You have time to get him once we’re done here, but you have to leave your phone at the lab. I
don’t think he knows that I tell you yet, but he’ll probably figure it out,” he continued. “The killer
uses it as a distraction. He’s not the right boy, but he leaves a note at that scene. You need to get
that too so no one falls for that. This part…this part seems to work.”

Dameron’s eyes went wide. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“I’ve been through today already. He somehow knows about your nephew and uses it as a
distraction from the real kid he takes. We stopped him from taking the other kid yesterday, but that
ended really badly. The DA, Palpatine, is our main suspect. We found the same paper used for the
notes at his office.”

“Jesus Christ, okay, this goes way up then,” he replied. “Okay, so what’s the plan? Try that again
and you know, not uh…what happened?”

He flushed in shame, looking down at his hands. “He blew up a school because we were hiding
and he couldn’t find us.”

Rey gasped and Finn sat up straighter.

“You’re telling us this like it really happened?” The other man asked.

Kylo nearly snapped at him but instead took a deep breath. “It’s happening to me. Every day.
Everyday, we think we get ahead of him and he’s somehow…fixated on me. And he always goes
after Rey to get back at me. It’s been…hard.”

“Yeah, you look like shit,” Dameron snorted, again. Maybe he wasn’t worth trusting. “But we’ve
got other people to think about. So what’s the plan? I go get Elias and then…how do we keep all
of this straight?”

Rey had already retrieved her notebook and was writing out the plan, following Kylo’s lead. He
nodded to her and she smiled, glowingly at him. It pained him to return the look.

He laid out the plan he had been mulling over the entire morning. Poe follows his usual route of getting the boy, hopefully earlier. That part was starting to bother him, but he assumed that this was what happened the first day and the killer just let it play out as it should and expect the rest of the team to take the bait.

“We should let him think that we’re following Elias this time,” Kylo said. “It’s hard to figure out what he knows and doesn’t know, but we need to let him think that the rest of the team is chasing that lead.”

Rey nodded. “Yes, it’s the same with our phones. If he’s following them, we should leave them here. He might think that we’re hiding again, but somewhere else.”

He bit his lip. “Yeah, we, I tried to get us out of here once. He found us. And there’ve been other days that I’m not proud of.”

He couldn’t keep that part from her and her face softened at his tone. Stop caring about me, Rey, he thought desperately.

“Okay, so the next part? What about the other kid? And the school?” Dameron had started to pace around the room.

“Right,” he sighed. “I’m going to call the parents and say that there’s a threat against children imminent in the park. Tell them to stay home. He sends some redheaded idiot to take that kid and he’s just following orders.”

“Okay, and then?”

“We need to find the homeless man,” he started. “He’s got some strange burnt-up trashman who he’s got a bomb strapped to. I thought he was harmless. Um, except for when we got blown up once. But he sends him into the school. I think that’s where Finn can help.”

“Me? Why?”

“We’ve got Rey’s friend Rose at the courthouse too. She needs to get the notebook and the map from his desk, but not until later.” He continued. “God, I need more people.”

Rey raised an eyebrow. “You know Rose too?”

“And your friend Maz,” he replied. “I told you, we’re friends.”

She seemed to blush lightly and kept making notes. Goddammit. “So we go to the DA’s office and get them from her?”

He nodded. “She needs to create another distraction. I think that he’ll suspect that it’s us, but she can get it. I know when to do it. Palpatine seemed to be threatening me on one of the days and now we have the notepad. He mentioned something about my parents that sounded strange when I thought about it again. He didn’t really like me so much at the time, so I didn’t really realize there might be something behind it.”

All three of them agreed with small nods and he again tried to settle into the day. They still looked at him with hints of suspicion, but seemed to be willing to take on new tasks that were different from everyday life. He had a team and he had to be a leader. He had Rey, just not in the way that his emotions were pushing him towards. The only loose end was the truck, but he still couldn’t
figure that part out.

“We’ll need phones, somehow.” He groaned to himself.

“Oh, we sell cheap phones at the stand,” Finn added. “If I go out there and pretend to go back to work, he won’t notice, right? I’ll come around back, give them to you guys, and then I’ll go to wherever you think that homeless guy will be. And then what? Call you?”

Kylo thought it over. “No. Follow him. See where he goes. He dumps the vest at first, but there might be more to it. Can you do that for us?”

He nodded. “Hey, I owe you, I guess, for not sending me downtown.”

And so the day officially started. Dameron took Kylo’s car again and went back to the lab, after grabbing a burner phone from Finn. Rey quickly changed and he regretted that she wouldn’t be able to shower, but she didn’t seem to care that much that day. She was pulling her hair into a tight ponytail as he called the Jinn family and made sure that they promised not to leave the house for anything. They sounded terrified, especially getting a call that was directed at them, but he told them that it was very serious and aimed at families who’d been in the area in the last six months, taking a chance. That part was taken care of; no romantic walk in the park today. She kept giving him small, soft looks that made him want to tell her everything. But it was all too much. They were in the alley behind his apartment building when he was finally alone with her and was having trouble finding words as they waited for Finn.

“Kylo, I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

“For what you’re going through. I’m still trying to process everything and figure out how this is possible. I don’t know why I believe you, but you just look at me like I’m going to disappear at any second. You’re unfocused. If I die everyday, that can’t be easy.”

“You have no idea,” he looked down at his hands and felt her touch his arm. “Rey, you’re always an important part of today. You…I really value you as a partner now and I hate the thought of losing you. We’ve talked about many things on the other todays. I know it’s not fair that I know about you and you don’t know me, but I hope that we can work on that.”

“I’d like that,” she smiled. “I’d also like not to die.”

“Yeah, me too.”

Finn rejoined them, handing them the phones. “The other numbers are in there. Text me the address and when I need to be there. I’ll do the best that I can.”

“I know you will,” Rey assured. “Thank you so much for believing us.”

So there was an us. He wondered again if she was so desperate for a partner that she took the first chance she got. He really had let her down before. He felt heavy as they left for the courthouse, and he explained his idea further. Rose was the one to check the office. All she had to do was walk in, grab the papers, and get the clues to them. But there was too much time in between. He sighed, wanting the day to go faster.

“We’ll stop for breakfast along the way,” she offered. “Don’t be too nervous, we…we have a plan. I need to know more about this, Kylo. I believe you, but you need to tell me a little bit about what’s going on. Don’t just say you want to be a better partner, actually be one.”
He reluctantly agreed and tried to look relaxed in her presence. It stopped being an act after a few minutes into their quick breakfast at a nearby café. He kept checking his watch. Poe had to have the boy by now. Now they were waiting for Finn.

“What do you know about me?” she asked. “That was something you said before.”

He took a long drink of coffee. “Your parents abandoned you when you were a child. You came to live here with your great aunt when you were a teenager. You…you were attacked by a robber in high school and that’s what made you want to be a cop.”

She blinked at him, swallowing a bite of her bagel. “I…wow. What else is bothering you, though?”

He wanted to tell her more. He wanted to tell her about how attractive she was and loved how she made him feel. The feeling of her short finger nails against his back. He wanted to tell her how wonderful it was to kiss her and make love to her. He wanted to share both the good days and the bad days with her. But none of that was a good idea. He put himself back on the roof and the resentment in her voice.

“Rey, these days have been long and hard. I can’t seem to catch a break,” he shrugged. There was no way he could not tell her. “Yesterday, we got into a fight about the school bombing. You were so angry with me for…well for everything. You died alone on the roof when he strangled you. I can’t let you die alone again.”

She frowned, then nodded along. “I’m so, so sorry for that Kylo. I can’t imagine how it feels.”

“Dying isn’t…it’s quick, it doesn’t really feel like anything. But I know there have been times when you were in so much pain,” he shook his head, still remembering the shock of the initial day. “The first time, you thought that sacrificing yourself would save the boy. That’s the moment I keep thinking about when I close my eyes. He pretends to give us a choice just to toy with us. And you died for an empty promise.”

A sad silence settled between them and she took a long look out the window, watching the people stream by. Were they just living the same days over and over again without knowing it?

He glanced at the time. “We need to go now.”

They reached the courthouse only a few minutes later and Rey managed to convince a slightly unwilling Rose to go through with their plan. She let them hide in the tiny office and again, the fire alarm went off. The sound brought him back to the previous time and made his head hurt. The last time they had been there, he’d been able to hold her. Now, they were sitting across a messy desk, waiting for her friend to return. Push away the feelings, he tried to tell himself again.

In the time that it took to evacuate, and Rose to get back, they’d received a text from Finn. The homeless man had left the vest again, and he had called the cops anonymously. He was keeping his distance, and the man was moving across the city. He was heading downtown. Kylo had a suspicion about where he was going.

They didn’t talk in the time alone in the office. Rey kept pretending not to stare at him and the way that his shoulders were slumped and he made a point of only offering soft looks when he met her eyes. She was too smart to avoid noticing that there was something more to all of this. There would be questions at some point.

Rose burst into the room, out of breath and handing the papers roughly to Rey. “Here! I have to run again, or else they’ll know.”
And she was gone again. Kylo knew that the redhead, Hux, would be heading up the stairs at that point. Or he suspected that he was.

“Let’s go before anyone catches us here,” he said. “I have a bad feeling about this place.”

“Where should we go?”

He told her about the map, and how the only mark was at the Cathedral. It was the next lead that they had. “If Finn has his eyes on the homeless man, and he’s heading there, then we should too.”

She nodded. “That sounds like a good idea.”

It wasn’t a long cab ride, but traffic started to crawl. He could relax a little about the truck, since he didn’t think they were being followed. Dameron texted them that the DA was at the office and raising hell. Kylo replied that he should keep an eye on him and let them know when he left. He didn’t want to be surprised.

The traffic was at a standstill and he rested his head on the back of the seat. “This is taking too long.”

“Kylo, I know that we’re dealing with something strange, but also an intense case but,” she started and he knew what was coming. “But is there something that you’re not telling me? About today?”

They locked eyes and he knew he couldn’t lie to her. He was instantly drawn to her soft, pink mouth, held slightly open in questioning. She’d followed along with him the entire day, without really questioning it. Well, she had, but not in direct ways. Insisting that he eat breakfast was a form of protest. She picked up on it even when he was fighting against his feelings. Inhaling, she slowly reached out and tucked a strand of hair behind his ear. He was lost in her again.

“I can never keep this from you, Rey,” his voice was low, still relishing the sensation of her touch. “And I’m sorry I didn’t tell you when you first came up. I wanted to try not sharing this with you because it hurts. We’ve been…together on some of the other days. You’re so beautiful and always, always it’s something that I want to lose myself in. These days are so hard and I’ve been dealing with watching you die for almost two weeks.”

She blushed, but didn’t say anything.

“I love you,” he confessed. “I love you to the point that I can’t focus entirely on the case. I’ve had perfect moments with you and then they are shattered when he shoots you, stabs you, strangles you…And then the next day, I have to tell you all over again.”

“Kylo…” she slowly reached out to take his hand. “I don’t know what to say.”

“It’s unfair that this is all too much for you. I mean, to you, I’m still the same jerk I was yesterday,” he squeezed her hand slightly. “And I’ve had all this time to get to know you as a person, but not completely. I wish that we could have more time together.”

She seemed to take his words to heart. Looking out the window briefly, she sighed. “You need to take a break.”

He shook his head. “I can’t Rey. If more people die, you’ll hate me. I’ve seen your eyes when I do something stupid and it’s almost like watching you die. Your heart, your mind...you’re so caring and I never want you to hate me. The other way is pointless too. If we try to run, he’ll find us.”

“Look, Kylo, you just said that you can’t focus. If you can’t do that, you can’t lead us,” she said,
firmly. “We have a team now, you have a team. We have more clues than we had yesterday, even if they are coming from strange places. Those other days, those other times, I must have had the same feelings for you that I have right now. The person you are today, when you’re not looking at me with sad eyes and accept going for breakfast rather than snapping at me, I like that person. I believe you. I’m here now.”

“I know you are, but I don’t know when you won’t be.”

She gave him a small, loving smile. “See, that’s why you need to take a break. If today doesn’t work, and tomorrow is today again, or however you said it since none of this really makes sense, you need to get yourself together. If you’ve been dealing with this for two weeks, that’s two weeks more than me. You must be exhausted.”

“You have no idea,” he replied as the traffic started to move again. “But Rey, what could I say to you that would convince you to just…leave with me. Leave the case. Leave our duty. You haven’t really liked that when I’ve tried it before.”

“You’ll figure it out,” she smirked. “If you really know me. Promise me.”

He managed a small smile. “Okay. If today doesn’t work, we take a break. I promise.”

They pulled up to the cathedral and left the cab, although he contemplated asking him to stay. There was some confidence back in his stride as they went inside; it was a release to let her know and he was less conflicted. They arrived just after a public tour of the massive and ornate building, but before the next mass. The churchwoman at the gift shop annex room greeted them and let them explore up until the next mass. Her brow had furrowed worriedly as they started to walk around the pews, looking for anything that might get them closer to the DA and his connection to all of this.

“Have you ever been here before?” She asked in a whisper, taking in the high ceiling and bronze ornaments.

He shook his head. “I’m not Catholic.”

“Neither am I.”

They stood before the sanctuary altar and he breathed in the perilous feeling that overtook him in the space. They’d found nothing. There was no one there, except for the staff that was starting to mill around before mass. He had exchanged a light look with her as she stood near the altar, looking tall and elegant in the soft light that surrounded them. His heart couldn’t stay away from her but here, in this space, there was an eeriness that made the day feel even stranger. Turning away, he tried to reorient his thoughts.

“Come look at this,” he motioned. She moved to stand next to him and they peered into a dip in the floor. Names and dates were carved into careful memorials. They were investigating the crypt when the churchwoman caught up with them.

“We’re going to start letting people in soon,” she said, her voice hushed. “You are welcome to stay and listen in the back.”

He nodded. “We would appreciate that, ma’am.”

“We’re not…we’re not Catholic,” Rey added.

The woman shrugged, looking slightly annoyed. Dealing with tourists all day clearly didn’t sit well with her. “God’s word is for everyone. I don’t think that you’ll burn up just by hearing it.”
She placed them in a back pew and Kylo carefully studied everyone who walked by. There was no one there who he recognized from previous days.

“Anything?”

He shook his head. “Any word from Finn or Dameron?”

She checked her phone and lightly nodded. “Finn says that he lost the homeless man not far from here so he’s waiting outside. Dameron…” her phone buzzed as she spoke. “The DA must have left a few minutes ago. He missed when he left.”

“Tell him to come here.”

She quickly replied and then turned the phone to silent. He copied her, not wanting to feel even more uncomfortable in the cathedral. His family had never really attended any church or temple. He had vague memories of Hanukah when he was young, but that fell away when his father died. His mother just took the holidays as days free from school and work. He spent them mostly away from her as she tried to force him into being more social until that was another failed project. When he was a teenager, he’d usually spend the time reading to her. As the lights of the interior started to glow from the rows of lit candles, he realized that she had been trying to teach him how to follow logic and clues. There would always be some question about how people were thinking or reacting in the stories; how to follow the next clue in the path. She always said that he shouldn’t become a police officer, but she supported him in her own way. Their row filled up, which made him feel slightly tense. He sat closer to Rey, lightly touching her leg to watch for anyone that they might know. Stuck in the corner, they were obscured from the passing faces. Ducking behind the others, they spotted him.

Mixed in the throng of people, heading up the aisle, was Palpatine.

“Kylo.” She hissed. “That’s him, the DA.”

“We’ll get him outside,” he quickly texted the other two, ignoring the glares from the people beside them.

The doors shut and he suddenly felt trapped. Incense and heat took over the environment. The music started to play and an ancient priest slowly started the procession down the aisle. He looked to be at least 80 years old, but held his shoulders firmly. Kylo kept looking for the DA and found him in the second row. Okay, he wasn’t going anywhere and clearly had some importance in this community; the pressure of the election must also play a role.

He let his mind wander over the course of the half an hour. He went back over the last few loops, but also drifted to memories of his family. He then thought about Rey and how he had been so unkind to her before. Rituals were a good way to lose oneself in thoughts. They stood when the others stood and tried to follow along with the rituals. He just stared at the hymnal book while she tried to read along. Was she Protestant then? He was getting nervous when everything appeared to be wrapping up. They would have to get outside before the DA and hope that he also took the main entrance.

The priest started to exit and everyone started milling about to leave. They quickly ducked out, ignoring how people again looked angrily at them as they pushed by others, getting out into the sunlight and spotting the others at the bottom of the stairs. Kylo nodded as they joined them.

“We need to confront him here, we don’t have a choice,” he handed Dameron the papers they’d got from Rose. “I’m sorry it’s not clean, but we have the security guard who can place it in his office.”
Dameron nodded. He still grimaced, though. “You know that’s not enough.”

“I know,” he sighed. “But we have to try.”

The crowd continued to stream by and they spotted Palpatine.

“Hey!” Rey called, getting his attention. “We need to talk to you!”

The older man looked at them with wide, shocked and angry eyes. In the space of a breath he felt a sudden rage pass between them. If he ran, Kylo would run him down easily. Instead of taking off, his face reddened in a deep anger as he approached them, shoving people aside.

“You two!” He nearly shouted. “And you, Dameron! What are you doing here!? This case is going to cost me the election. What are you doing following me? Following me to church?”

“Yeah, sir, we have some questions about this,” Dameron, bold at being accused, produced the notebook. “What are you doing with the same notebook as the killer?”

“Please,” he rolled his eyes. “That’s a stack of paper. I don’t even recognize it.”

“Are you sure? It was in your office,” Kylo started. “And one of the suspects was seen going up to your office.”

Palpatine turned to glare, heavily at him. “And what is it you’re getting at, Detective Ren?”

“We’re going to take you in for questioning, sir,” Rey said, firmly. “Please don’t make us arrest you.”

“You idiot, of course you can’t arrest me,” he shook his head. “Fine, whatever you think you have is nonexistent. But I’ll cooperate. Just to humiliate you both. You will not have jobs tomorrow, I will make it impossible for you to ever work anywhere in this city ever again.”

Kylo roughly grabbed his arms, holding them behind the man’s back to hiss in his ear. “As long as I stop you, I don’t care.”

Dameron stood by Kylo, eyeing the DA, as Finn and Rey waved down a passing patrol car. The two younger officers looked shocked at having to take the DA to the station but complied when the case of the murdered children was brought up. Kylo wouldn’t let Rey go alone and sent Dameron instead.

He was shaking as the car pulled away.

“Is this it? I thought so yesterday and that…that just fell apart,” he mumbled to himself, looking up at the high spire of the cathedral. The sun was still shining. It was still today.

Rey looked at him and frowned, before turning to Finn. “Go home. But be careful. We don’t know where the other two are.”

“Rey, what about the bomb and the homeless guy? I lost him. I messed up.”

Kylo shook his head. “If he tossed that bomb, Palpatine can’t give him the other one. If he’s in custody, it should…it should be okay.”

Finn slowly nodded. “This is…I still don’t get any of this. How do you know? Has this happened before?”
Frowning, Kylo shrugged. “We have to try. If it doesn’t work, we’ll have the next today. If it does, then we’ll…”

There was a sudden ringing in his ears and his head snapped to the entrance to the cathedral. No.

At the top of the stairs was a familiar shabby coat and scarred face. The homeless man laughed as he locked eyes with him. “Too late this time.”

He threw himself on top of Rey, trying to shield her as the man blew himself up. His last thoughts were wondering if this was finally it. They had the suspect. They had stopped him. That should end the loop.

But she had to live.
Two weeks of waking up before six a.m. was something that he was used to. But the shiver and the jolt of awakening in the same day — this time at only 5.57 — made it feel like twice the amount of time. He looked up at his ceiling and tried to clear his eyes. There was a distant ringing in his ears and he was almost certain that his eyes couldn’t focus because of the explosion. But that was yesterday and impossible.

Palpatine wasn’t their killer, unless he’d hid the bomb for the homeless man. There was still so much more there and he’d found a deep hole that he was afraid that he’d never come out of it. But even if Palpatine was the killer, it didn’t end the loop until they could prove it, apparently. There was something that they were still missing. But working as a team had gotten them somewhere. It actually felt good to work with the other two men. But the team could wait another day. Folding his hands on his stomach, he took a deep breath.

Today, he’d made a promise to take a break.

The radio clicked on as he moved to take a shower, ignoring the note being slipped under the door as he went. The knock and the pressure of the day lurked outside the door. If the killer knew that Finn knew about the loop, if it were Palpatine in this case, there shouldn’t be another note. He was another dead end, or at least he seemed to be. This could be a way of trying to throw them off. He had to file that away. But today he needed to figure out how to convince Rey to be off duty.

Warm water washed over his body. He felt tired and hunched over, his shoulders always hurting from how he needed to stand and sit. The memories of taking her in the shower made his chest tighten and his legs stiffen. He felt at home in her body but she was a genuine person. He knew about her past and would always carry the guilt of not having her full consent the first time. He could put that aside and treat this Rey with the respect that she deserved. He trusted her earlier judgement and diligently planned out the day in his head.

The washroom felt empty, leaving it without her. He’d almost forgotten what it was like to be alone.

After shaving and dressing, he texted her: Have breakfast with me? KR.

His phone buzzed seconds later. Since when do you eat breakfast?

He smiled at the message. Today I do. Come over. I need to talk to you.

What’s wrong? Send me the address and I’ll be there as soon as I can.

He replied with his apartment number again and slowly started his plan. After glaring at the dead
crow and moving the note aside, he put a chair by the door for her bag. He was making tea when she came in, carefully knocking on the doorjamb as she entered. Her bag safely sat on the chair rather than the floor. He’d have to do that more often.

“Kylo, what’s going on? What’s happening?” She looked at him sitting at the table and moved to stand by him, looking confused. This was his day to lose.

“Rey, if you had one day to live, if this was the last day of your life, what would you do with it?” He asked, sliding the tea cup and sugar across to her.

She sat down, narrowing her eyes. “Are you dying, or are you going to kill me?”

“I’m not dying. I’m not going to kill you. It’s just a question,” he started. “I want to be a better partner to you. I haven’t been so far. I’ve been a jerk and ignored you and how talented you are. You’ve been trying and I just keep being myself. Today, today is different.”

“Is there poison in this?” She asked, a slight joke in her tone. He knew she was teasing, but a brief vision of her seizing on the floor flashed across his eyes.

Shaking it off, he smirked as he raised his chin. “Answer the question.”

Stirring the sugar in her tea, she shrugged. “I never really thought about it. We are in a dangerous line of work, so I try not to think about dying. Every day could be our last day and I just expect my last day to be working. Kylo, why are you asking this? Has something happened?”

“Something has happened and I can’t figure out what and why,” he sipped his tea then took a deep breath. “For the past two weeks, I’ve been in the same day. It’s always the same day, no matter what I do. This all sounds so unbelievable, but I need you to trust me. I need you to be here with me and help me make sense of it all.”

She took a slow drink from her mug. “So, today really is the last day of your life?”

“And yours,” he replied, frowning and taking the mood to the serious level he needed to get through. “Every day, before midnight, you die somehow. The killer is out after you and me and whenever we think we’ve solved it, something blows up or you get thrown off a bridge. I…I can die too. Yesterday, the last today, I thought that it would finally end. I thought he had caught him and that would stop the loop. But instead, I woke up here, again. And it’s exhausting.”

“Yeah, you don’t look that good.”

“Thanks.”

She put her hands on the table and studied him, tapping her small nails to the wooden surface. “So, every day for the past two weeks, we have been trying to hunt him down. What clues do we have?”

“We have many more than we’ve found the previous few weeks. We know that he’s somehow connected to the DA’s office — we were poisoned there and caught one of the suspects coming up the stairwell. Your friend Rose is a very kind person, by the way. Maz too. Another thing is that he has at least three other accomplices: this redheaded idiot, a homeless man, and another, shorter one. I haven’t seen his face yet. We also figured out how he was following us. He can track our phones and we were able to throw him off a couple of times. He also knows things about Dameron, the forensics guy. And there’s something at the cathedral, St. Pats, that’s important to him,” he tried to run down the rest of the clues. “I think that’s it.”

She shut her eyes in frustration. “Maybe…maybe you’ve gone insane. Maybe you’re dreaming all
of this."

“I wish I were, but it feels so real, you feel real,” he started down that path, despite how his insides screamed against him to stop. “Rey, you know we’ve never talked about our pasts before. And I haven’t bothered to ask anyone else. I know that your parents were trash and sent you into care when you were five or six. You moved to America to be with your great aunt when you were a teenager. And I know…I know what happened your last year of high school.”

She actually stood from the table. “That is…that’s…how do you know that?”

“Do you believe me?”

She blinked, crossing and uncrossing her arms and then finally sat down again. She took a deep breath and looked at him with a relatively unreadable expression. “I…I have to believe you. You’re my partner. You’re trusting me by telling me this, but I’m still confused. This is all so unbelievable but, God, Kylo you’re different. The way that you’re talking, sitting, even smiling. You’re actually talking to me, even though none of it makes sense. No one at the office knows about my…rape. No one could tell you that. I’ve never talked about Maz and Rose…”

“And Finn, who works downstairs.”

She closed her eyes and sighed again. “So, why are we sitting here? Why aren’t we going after him, trying to stop this?”

He couldn’t mess up this part. “Rey, I’m not trying to run away from our duty and what we need to do. But I can’t lead our team if I’m just…stuck. I’m exhausted by all of it and I’m starting to miss obvious things.”

“Our team?”

“Yeah, yesterday, I told Finn and Dameron about this. Rose too. We worked together. We must have been close because he blew us up,” he shook his head. “I think that he uses bombs when we don’t do what he wants.”

“What does he want us to do?”

“Chase him, catch him? Follow his rules and clues so he’s in charge?” He shrugged. “He blames me for the loop, somehow, and has made it personal. I haven’t done anything to cause this other than…watch you die.”

She softened at his tone. “You…you seem so sure. It sounds like you’ve actually…”

“I don’t want to describe what you look like dead, Rey,” he sipped at his now-cool tea. “I see it every time I close my eyes.”

She was quiet for a while and he was worried that she would leave.

“I’m sorry, this is overwhelming,” he said. “And that it sounds insane.”

“No, no I’m just trying to think of what else you could tell me that would prove you actually know me.”

He cleared his throat. “You have a small mole, right here.”

He pointed at the spot on his chest about where he remembered it was on hers. Blinking at him,
she slowly smirked, a low flush filling her face.

“So, there’s that too,” he swallowed.

“I think…I think that I’m starting to understand,” she nodded. “What’s different about today? I mean, this today.”

“Yesterday, I promised you that we’d take a break. We’d do something, anything that stops me from being on edge. I can’t work with the team if I feel like snapping at them for not understanding. I’ve lost focus before and I never really recovered. Look, I…other people will die today. People who have died before, and maybe new people. Children, civilians…I’m not asking you to sacrifice them so I can take a day off,” he looked at her, pleading. “But I’d like to spend the day with you.”

“That’s the part I don’t like, but you already knew that,” she finished her tea. “Kylo, if I go along with this, I don’t want you to do it again. If I wake up tomorrow and the city is in ruins and hundreds of people are dead, I swear I will shoot you.”

“I’d welcome it, if that’s the case,” he shook his head. “I don’t like it either, but you thought that I needed it.”

“Yeah, I guess I would, given how…” she paused, studying him. “Sad you look.”

“You’ve been the only bright spot on these days. I wouldn’t have gotten this far without you and how you think and act,” he met her eyes. “We take today, and I’ll tell you some more about the case. We can plan a little. But at some point, I’d like to think about something else.”

“There really is something going on with you,” she stood from the table moving around to brush her hand across his cheek. “Who are you and what have you done with my partner?”

“I think now, I’m really your partner,” he replied. “Before, I was just a jerk.”

“A talented jerk,” she gave him a small smile. “Kylo, I’m going to ask about the case because for me, it’s still a priority. But if you say what’s happening is really happening, then maybe this is what to do. Rest and recover. I’m tired too.”

Taking a chance, he pulled her onto his lap. She tensed briefly before relaxing a little. “So answer my question: what would you do if you only had one day to live?”

“I guess I would go to the beach,” her lips slightly turned up. “If I’m not allowed to go to work.”

“Then we’ll go to the beach, after you shower and we go for breakfast.”

She rolled her eyes, leaving his grip to grab her bag to head to the washroom. He instantly missed the contact. “I must be going insane too.”

He carefully put the chair he’d set by the door in front of it. Returning to his bedroom, he contemplated putting on his holster. He promised her he’d take a break, but he was still certain that they would somehow be followed. Making a quick decision, he put it on, hiding it under his suit coat. He was still holding out hope that getting her past midnight might change things.

He heard the washroom door open and moved to greet her. “We have to leave our phones here.” He’d heard his buzzing from across the room, angrily reminding them of what they were doing.

“Well, if we’re going to ignore our duty, might as well,” she still sounded unsure. He rubbed her
shoulder and she tensed against him. “Kylo, just give me time. I feel like I’m abandoning everything. Maybe…maybe just give Dameron the heads up?”

“If…it will make you feel better,” he nodded. He called the lab and Dameron answered.

“You need to get to your sister’s now,” he said. “Poe, trust me, Elias is in danger.”

“What? Who is this?”

“Just go now.”

And he hung up and placed his phone on the counter. “I…it’s better he didn’t know it was us.”

“So, no one else remembers either?” She asked, as they headed out into the hallway of his building. He left the door unlocked and open, hoping it would throw off whoever might show up looking for them.

He shook his head. “I think that either the killer is in the loop or somehow knows how the day will unfold.”

She frowned lightly. “Maybe he started it somehow? If it’s happening, something must to have had started it.”

“Yeah, and the part with the children, I’m still thinking about,” he led her out the back door, down into the alley and through to the other street than the one they had emerged onto on previous days. Covering his tracks, he hoped he could relax and that would help her feel more comfortable.

“There’s been so many of them,” she looked serious. “I hate this case and it’s the first big one I’ve ever had. They might not let me stay detective if we don’t figure this out.”

He frowned, hailing a cab. “I…I wasn’t really helping. I really regret how I treated you, Rey. You didn’t deserve that.”

She looked at him oddly again. “You really are different. You know, Kylo…when I got a promotion and I heard I would be partnered with you…I heard about how smart and how single-minded you are…and then you spent a month ignoring or being rude to me.”

They got into the taxi before he spoke again. “I…I’ve only just realized that over these last two weeks. I wasn’t fair to you. You’re talented and beautiful and show me so much more care than I deserve.”

He gave the address to a small diner he knew across the city, determined to be as far away from his apartment and the earlier paths that they had taken. He was studying the city as the streets slid by and felt her take his hand.

“I must really have trusted you to tell you what happened to me when I was a teenager,” she spoke lowly.

“I’m only sorry that I didn’t know before,” he replied, squeezing her hand. “That’s what partners share, right?”

“Then I guess we really are partners now.”

They held hands the rest of the ride and he only let go to let her out of the car.

“I don’t think we’ve ever really eaten together without you being mad at me,” she said, once they
got their menus from a sunny looking waitress.

“How…how did that make you feel?”

“Like you hated me,” she dropped her head before lifting it again. “But I guess that’s changed now.”

The waitress returned and they quickly gave their orders. He couldn’t remember the last time he’d been there. It might have been on one of the rare brunches he had been forced into by his mother. She didn’t cross his mind all that often, given the caseload and how hard he worked himself, but talking to Rey earlier — the other Rey, the other today — had brought back memories of her and his father. Hearing Palpatine bring them up still irked him.

“Rey, once we get out of today, I promise that everything will change,” he cleared his throat. “Once I figure out how to get out of today.”

“Once we figure it out.”

The waitress brought coffee and he watched her carefully sip it. He had scanned the crowd and no one looked similar to previous days. Still, there were too many things haunting him. He shook his head, and tried to focus on being in the moment.

“I actually like being part of a team,” he admitted. “I…I mean the other guys work fine, but your friends, they seem to get it in a different way. They question things, but seem to get the bigger picture.”

“I don’t really know Poe all that well, except to say hi in the office, when we meet one another. But I guess we’ve talked at some after works,” she thought a little bit more. “Finn, I know mostly because I fell running one day. I guess it was right outside your apartment, but I didn’t know that. He…he helped me out even when I argued that I was fine. We meet occasionally for coffee when he has the time. He grew up an orphan but he got out of the neighbourhood. He’s always trying to help out the kids there so he doesn’t really have spare time or money. We…we connected that way. Not having parents.”

Their food arrived and they were left alone again.

“You can talk to me, Rey,” he said. “I’m here for you.”

She laughed lightly. “It’s still strange for me to hear you say that. I…I guess on other days, we were moving so fast that I just accepted everything and went with it.”

“It seemed like you did,” he replied, starting to eat his omelette. “And I guess I pushed you too hard most days. I have this…timeline in my head that’s hard to get rid of. Maybe that’s why you suggested a break, so I hold back a little and give everyone more space and explanation.”

“If the timeline is too tight, then maybe we don’t have time,” she shrugged. She took a few bites from her fruit bowl before continuing. “I think that is what gets everyone into it: you can be commanding and compelling.”

“Thank you.”

“It’s not always a compliment.”

He grinned at her as they ate. She seemed to relax as the morning went on. He studied her suit coat and carefully buttoned blouse. She couldn’t wear that to the beach.
“You need new clothes,” he said before quickly adding, “For the beach.”

She mocked glared at him. “I guess this would feel less like…work.”

They finished eating and he gave the waitress a $100 tip, not really caring about the money. It would all be reset the next day. She let him hold her hand as they walked down the street. The clouds had cleared again and the sun had brightened the sky. He almost wished he’d left his watch at home too so he would stop checking it.

Finding a small shop, he let her pick out a simple, yet elegant, yellow dress that slightly hugged her body. He actually enjoyed watching her try on clothes. The few times he had made it beyond the second or third date with a woman, he’d refused to do these things. There was something about being her that made him want to try harder and be a decent person.

The woman working in the store brought a pair of neutral flats and placed them at her feet.

“Kylo?” She asked. “Shoes too.”

“You’re not wearing those ugly things that you wear to the office,” he said, leaning back in the chair outside the change room. “Get whatever.”

The clerk’s eyes lit up but Rey shook her head. “The shoes will be fine, thank you. I’ll…I’ll wear them out.”

The woman nodded. “Do you want a bag for your clothes?”

“No, she’ll get them tomorrow.” Kylo offered and Rey raised a mocking eyebrow at him.

“Great! If you’re all set?”

Rey paused, noticing the bag of purses on the wall. “Kylo, I forgot my bag at your place.”

“You always do.”

She blushed and the clerk laughed lightly. “We’re always leaving things at our boyfriend’s. It will be there when you get back. Would you like to pay by credit or debit?”

He handed the woman his card as Rey walked up to lightly brush her hand against his legs. The clerk happily walked to the register to ring them up. It felt strange to be in a store, doing something that normal people did everyday, with the weight of the day still hanging over him. He again had to press on his mind to put himself in the moment. She was here, despite how often he caught her lost in thought. She was willing to trust him again and that made the heartbreak on the roof lift slightly.

“Hey,” he said, trying to pull her closer. “This isn’t so bad, right?”

“No one has ever taken me shopping before,” she commented, still keeping a slight distance. “I…thank you. Yesterday, I never imagined we’d be on a date.”

“When this is over, I’ll take you on a real one.”

The clerk returned, asking for his signature. He stood, moving to the counter. Rey had let her hair down and looked more comfortable without her normal clothes. He took her hand as they exited the store, noticing a small wink from the store clerk as they left.

“So, the beach?” He said.
“Yes, it’s been so long.” She looked distant as they walked to a subway station. “One of the only happy memories I have of my parents was at the beach. It must have been just before they left me. I was what, five? Four? I really only remember it from how I’ve built it up over the years. They were having a good week. I think that Da was trying to go clean again and had got a job at one of the shops. Ma had been sick in hospital the week before so she’d been forced clean. I was so happy. I thought that… I thought that they’d be normal parents. A real family.”

He lightly pressed on her hand, telling her to go on.

“We took the train,” she smiled. “We actually paid for tickets. I just remember ducking onto cars before that. It felt…like we were normal. Then we got to the beach and had to sit on this ratty towel. I didn’t have a proper swimsuit so I just played in the water in my underwear. I should have been more embarrassed, but I was just so happy to feel the water.”

He stopped her, reaching for her other hand. “You were a child. It’s nothing to worry about.”

She smiled up at him. “Am I doing this to you? Making you kinder?”

“Yes, Rey,” he nodded. “I’m…I’m sorry I didn’t notice you earlier.”

He bent down to kiss her there, on the busy street. She gently leaned into it, accepting the gesture. He pulled her closer, touching her back. She was wearing different clothes. It almost felt like a different day.

Someone bumped his shoulder and he had to turn and glare. He only caught the back of the man’s head, but it pulled him out of the moment.

“Let’s go, or we’ll never get there.”

Riding the subway, he held her hand. Watching the stations fly by, it reminded him of how big the city was and how many stories that were happening on this day. Was it even possible to unravel it all? There were millions of possible people and millions of possible lines. How many children did he need to take? They knew about the Jinn boy now, so there might be another one that he’d have to track down. It was better to have the team go to Dameron’s nephew’s. That way, they could try to sort out who might be taken next.

He had to shake his head again and realize that he should be talking to her about this rather than keeping it all inside.

“Rey, we can talk about the case,” he said, lowly into her ear. “I think that he might try to take another kid, not the other one, when the loop starts again. That would just prove that he’s in the loop.”

She nodded. “From what you said, it’s hard to tell. But if he deviates the plan, that would mean that he knows. But as long as he doesn’t know where we are, we can figure that one out too.”

He kissed her lightly on the cheek. “We’ll make the list again.”

“The list?”

“Yeah, I… one of the days, I started making a list of rules. It was a way to sort out the days,” he lifted his shoulders. “Now, they seem so jumbled.”

“What were the rules?”
“They…they didn’t really work.” He felt his face get hot and couldn’t look at her. “It works more when we write out what happens on the days. I’m worried what will happen when I can’t keep them all in my head.”

They were reaching the Brighton station in a few stops. He could almost see the wheels turning in her head. “Well, let’s write them down again. Fill me in. If it helps you in the future, just think of us, sitting at the beach, writing it all down.”

“Maybe that will help,” he kissed her lightly on the forehead. He was still amazed that she welcomed all of the touches. “That’s why you’re a better detective than I am. I realized a while ago that I sort of see the entire puzzle with only a few pieces. I think that’s why this day is so frustrating. I have the pieces, but can’t put it together. You…you tend to add up all of the pieces as we go and try to put it together, waiting to see the full picture and not reacting to false hopes.”

“Very detailed,” she smiled back at him. “That’s what they said when they offered me the promotion.”

To all of the other people on the subway car, they were just another couple. But she was just accepting what he was saying and thinking it over and then letting him touch her. He kept trying to put herself in her shoes — the new shoes that he had just bought her that had somehow cost $400 — and wondered what he would think if she came to him with this. He would have ignored her and turned her away. That’s what he would have done two weeks ago. But now, he would believe anything she would tell him.

They left the station, back into the sunlight. Compared to the nearly hour-long subway ride, the short walk to the beach was a relief. There were still people, but they weren’t all around them. He still hadn’t spotted anyone he recognized, nor anyone that looked suspicious. It was nearly midmorning. They should have already been the court house, on their way to the boy. Or was it the other way around? She stopped to buy a light blue notebook from a vendor with BRIGHTON printed on the cover as they neared the boardwalk. Maybe he did need to talk through it.

“Get a towel too,” he said, as she was still looking around the shop. “Something to sit on.”

She nodded, picking it up, then looked to him when she got up to pay. “I left my wallet in the store.”

He again reached for his card. “That’s my fault.”

Walking down the boardwalk, he tried not to touch her too often. Despite what he wanted, she was starting to make notes and asking him questions about the days. He told her to wait, bought some sandwiches from a cart for lunch later. For once, they would eat normally today. Then, he led her down towards the sand and the waves. September was not always the best weather but the sun was starting to warm up and it felt okay to sit a bit of a distance from the shore.

She sat down on the recently purchased towel and pulled out the notebook again.

“Okay, what do you remember from the first day,” she put on her detective voice. “I can help you walk you through it. What’s the first thing that you heard and touched?”

Again, they went through the days. And again, he tried not to hold back. He was starting to mix up some days and had to correct himself a few times. She had to stop him at some points, looking distantly at the waves as he described either her dying or how he felt about her. But then she would put on a neutral expression and keep going. He avoided asking her what she was thinking until he neared the end of the last day that he remembered.
“So…the day before, you wanted to push me away?”

He had to close his eyes, exhausted from retelling the days. “Rey, just…you died alone. You were so cold. The way you looked at me before you left made me hate myself.”

“There were dead children, Kylo.”

“Yes, I know I deserved it.”

She studied her notes one last time then closed the book. “So is Palpatine a dead end?”

“I don’t know,” he stretched out. He’d taken off his shoes and socks, enjoying the sand, despite the oncoming autumn weather. “I still think he’s part of it but I can’t place him in the story anymore. Either the killer planted the notepad, or is making them write the notes. The map could have been a distraction to be able to catch him. Either he left the homeless man the bomb somewhere, or was just there and someone was trying to frame him. I don’t know.”

She suddenly opened the notebook again. “Kylo, that makes sense. I mean, you said that it’s an election year. This case, these kids, that could cost him that. Could it be a rival? Who’s running against him?”

“The other candidate…” he searched his memory. “Something Kenobi. I can’t remember. But the name’s familiar. I must have heard it before.”

She nodded, writing down the name. “There’s no way to get this back to you?”

“You can’t send things into the past. The postal service is bad, but not that bad.”

They were quiet, except for the distant rolling of the waves, threatening a distant winter, and the laughter of children from the boardwalk. That reminded them both of their duty. They had to solve this, but that would have to be tomorrow.

“Kylo, I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

“For not remembering.”

He sat up. “Rey, that’s not your fault. Don’t take my problem and make it totally your own, that’s my job.”

Lightly smiling, she put the book down again. She blushed lightly. “That’s not what I meant.”

“Oh, so the romantic part.”

“Yeah.”

“The first time, Rey, if I had known what had happened to you, I would never have done something so…forcefully,” he said. “You…it was still beautiful, just bad timing.”

“I believe you,” her smile was tight. “I’m attracted to you, so I don’t think that, under the circumstances, that you really did anything really wrong. It’s still not right, if you think that way, so keep that in mind. I guess I responded because I…it’s been a long time since someone wanted me. I’ve been so busy with my career that I forgot that there is life out there.”

“Me too.”
“So I guess we deserve each other? Two broken people, caught in an endless loop. Trying to put the pieces together.”

“Always forgetting,” she added.

The sounds of the waves were soothing, taking away her words out onto the ocean. He never wanted to leave this place. It was nearing the time they would be trying to have lunch on the first day and that’s when the day tended to change. The homeless man would be waiting outside the lunch place, if he didn’t catch them on the road, as if he didn’t get the tip that they wouldn’t be there. Rey had to shake his arm to get him out of the memory.

“Let’s eat and then figure out the rest later.”

They unwrapped the sandwiches and he tried to talk about more of the lighter days. She started to laugh at some of the reactions from those around him during the loops that he was describing. The fact that they’d ran out onto the street unarmed, how much he disliked Maz’s strange apartment… He wished he had more funny moments to share with her but there weren’t many. However, there were no men in black lurking around them, he made sure. Finished the lunch, they dropped the garbage in a trashcan as they walked up the beach.

She let him slip his arm around her as they walked and he basked in it.

“Thanks for trusting me again,” he said as they reached a walkway back to the street. “Rey, I needed today. I needed…this.”

“After hearing what has happened, I believe you,” she shook her head. “No one could make what you said up. I…what you told me…I can’t imagine how hard it is to just keep going.”

“Maybe that’s why I needed a break: to just keep going. Rey, I need to figure all of this out. I can’t do it without you, but I don’t know how to do it feeling like this,” he confessed.

She glanced around the busy area, filling with residents and tourists. “There’re so many people. If we don’t follow what he wants you to do, who knows how he reacts when we’re unpredictable.”

Sudden panic struck him. “Shit, Rey, which card did I pay with at the shop? This one?”

She ran her tongue over your teeth. “Your debit. It’s the blue one, right?”

He checked his wallet. The credit card was black. His bankcard was blue. He took a deep sigh of relief. He needed to be more careful. In the back of his wallet, there was a card that he could use that he was certain no one could trace back to him.

“Is everything okay now?” she asked, playing with his hand.

“Yeah, it’s okay,” he said. “He’ll find the dress shop and your wallet. Hopefully he won’t check the transit cameras.”

“He…he probably will. That explains why we can never catch anything when he drops the other children,” she looked back out over the ocean. “Have you gone back and talked to the other parents? Now that you know more about his accomplice, it might be worth it to see if they remember anyone that might match that description in the days before they were taken.”

He grimaced. “I…I never thought about that. I was too busy moving forward, trying to catch him taking the current boy.”
“That’s why you need me.”

They walked for a while, both lost in thought. Not running from anyone, he suddenly realized how tired he was. Stopping at a café, they opened the notebook again and Rey carefully wrote out a plan for Day 15. The first part was assembling the team; it was something that she agreed with him on. The second part would be to go to the Jinn house rather than calling them or going to the courthouse. Once that boy was safe, they’d talk to the Windus. They would be mourning their daughter, so it was a good idea to follow the most recent child. Having Finn follow the homeless man felt counterproductive, since they knew where he would probably go. Rose could be convinced to find the notepad and the map.

“We could send Finn to talk to her,” Rey pointed out. “If Rose shows up at the station in uniform, no one will question her going up to Poe.”

He again agreed, stretching his arms behind his head and yawning. The planning was starting to wear him out. Rey wrote down another small note on the next page and closed the book.

“Hey, let’s go find somewhere to rest,” she said softly. “You look like you need it.”

“Yeah, we have the plan. Talking to the Jinns and Windus will help fill out the children’s part in this. I’d like to keep the homeless man from going anywhere, but we can work on that when it’s… when it’s today again,” he stood from the table and reached for her hand.

Finding a hotel not far from the boardwalk, he ignored the suspicious looks of the clerks as they checked in without luggage. He paid with his mother’s credit card; they technically had a shared account that he never used. He gave her last name as his, showing his badge as he did. The staff nodded and used the name, but didn’t seem to be happy about it. He just glared at them.

In their room, he sat down heavily on the bed. There’d never been really time for real rest on the previous days. It was all coming down on him now, in the early afternoon in a hotel room that was probably as safe as they were going to get. He noticed Rey unzipping her dress and hanging it in the closet. Studying her mostly naked body, he raised an eyebrow.

“It’s new, Kylo,” she rolled her eyes. “I don’t want to wrinkle it.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” he said. He went to the washroom to remove his clothes, worried that she’d notice the gun and holster. If this was a break, then he shouldn’t have it. After splashing water on his face, he noticed how haunted he looked. Two weeks of this and they still didn’t have a certain suspect. Maybe her plan now would work. Following the children was actually the best way to undo whatever plans the killer had, since they hadn’t tried that before.

He was hanging up his clothes as she dimmed the lights and turned down the bed.

“Come here,” she climbed into bed and reached for him. “You need this.”

He complied and she curled up against him, resting his head on his chest. He pulled her closer and sighed.

“So I always die before midnight?”

Her voice was low, almost sad. “Yes.”

“And you always fall asleep before 2 a.m.?”

He nodded again, pressing his lips to the top of her head.
“What do you think those times mean?”

Again, he hadn’t really considered the times to mean anything other than something random.
“Maybe the first loop set them up.”

“Hmm.” She traced her finger across his chest. “I’m glad you stayed with her, that other me. She must have been afraid.”

“You, she, thought it would save the boy,” he said, fighting back a yawn. “It was very brave.”

She leaned up, reaching to kiss him. “Go to sleep.”

“Mmmhmm.”

He slept. And he dreamed. He was having the last conversation with his father, something he hadn’t thought about in years. Maybe his earlier conversation with Rey and using his mother’s credit card had stirred some thoughts he had locked away years ago. He was a boy who just wanted to spend time with his father. His uncle Luke had been around more when his father was getting busier with work and he just didn’t fill the hole that his father’s gradual absence did. He’d been in the backyard when his father had come home for a rare lunch break. In the dreamscape, they were standing outside an altered version of his house. Things seemed exaggerated, but he still knew he was home. He felt like himself and the child he used to be at the same time. Dreams never made sense.

Han had gripped his shoulder. “How’s school going?”

“I hate it. No one talks to me.”

“Have you tried talking to them? You have plenty to talk about.”

“They just don’t get it.”

Han had frowned. “Look, kiddo, I’m…I’m going to have to work late again.”

Kylo had frowned, nearly wanting to cry at the words. “You’re always working.”

“Well, maybe tomorrow I can take the day off. It’s been a long day today and you and I can spend some time together.”

Then he left and the dream melted to the scene of his father’s murder. Now, he felt more like an adult, looking around a place he had never really been, but had thought constantly about. The body was across the floor of the small shop, facedown. Bright red blood stained the floor. He wanted to approach him, but found himself frozen. He felt angry that his father had left him with the promise of having a day off and a tomorrow.

A black-clad figure materialized in a doorway. The killer from now stepped into the fantasy scene from his past, haunting him at every turn. The dark form turned away and the dreamscape melted into black.

He slowly woke up, confused to be anywhere but in his own bed waking up to the alarm and the radio. He reached over and Rey was gone and he panicked until he heard the washroom door open.

She stepped out and met his nervous expression.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to wake you.”
He shook his head and rubbed his face. “It’s okay. What time is it?”

“Nearly six, we slept for a long time.”

He sat up, turning on the bedside lamp. Rey returned to the bed, kneeling next to him.

“Do you feel better now?”

He was still chasing shadows from his dream, trying to shake the gloomy feelings it had stirred up. “It’s good to wake up and see you alive.”

He leaned forward to kiss her and she responded, deepening it instantly, dipping her warm tongue into his mouth with a low sigh. He absently wondered how long she’d been awake. Her scent was soft and flowery, not like the usual sweat and nerves of the long days that they had spent together. Then, they had been under the pressure of the day and the plan. Now, they were just exchanging sleepy kisses in a hotel room, isolated from the real world. She shifted to straddle him and he moaned as his body reacted to her warm and firm form. Grinding against him, she hissed as she felt him getting harder. She was warm and strong and perfect. He wanted to wake up to this everyday.

“I still can’t believe you want me,” she pulled away to whisper. “No one’s ever looked at me the way that you do.”

“I can’t help it,” he settled his hands on her hips, feeling the soft fabric of her underwear. “I want to know more about you. Not just the sad things, but what makes you happy. I know that you like sugar in your tea. And you hate leaving the house unshowered.”

She smiled, brightly, wiggling against him. He saw her exhale deeply and felt her sex, clothed, against his. “This is very comfortable so, ask me something.”

“What was your worst subject in school?” He ran his hands down to grip her thighs.

“Maths. I hated it,” she touched his chest, running her hands to grip behind his neck. “What was yours?”

“Gym.”

“Gym?! Look at you!”

“I weighed like 110 pounds the first year of high school,” he shrugged, enjoying the feeling of her laughing against him. It sent shots of desire down his groin. “And I was also six feet tall. It wasn’t fun.”

“Didn’t you play basketball?” She giggled again as he shook his head and looked annoyed. “Well, I’m glad you got…better.”

She was studying his body, tracing his strong chest and shoulders and her touches were distracting him. Her fingers left soft caresses against his skin that burnt like trails of fire. He never thought of himself as attractive, but worked hard to look intimidating. She was looking at both the soft and hard parts of his body and he suddenly felt like all of the work was worth it.

“So another question,” he started, thinking of something as random as possible. “Have you ever been camping?”

“Hmm, um,” she thought. “I went hiking a few years ago in Colorado. We got lost and had to sleep outside, under a tree. All we had was water and it was freezing at night. I thought I was going to
die. He wouldn’t even share body warmth. All I had was a fleece coat and it was just awful. We… we found our way back the next day. But that wasn’t a good day.”

“Who were you with?”

“Just…just a guy,” she looked at the wall behind him. “It didn’t really work out. He broke up with me on my birthday. I felt like I’d never find someone again.”

“You…you have me, if you want me,” he said carefully.

She smirked. “Until it’s today again and I don’t remember any of this.”

“Well, we’ll find a way to work around that problem,” he kissed her nose, earning another smile. “I’ll remember for both of us.”

She looked at him and he could feel the hope in her eyes. “Okay, last question.”

He pulled her closer again, reaching to return to the tension from before. He licked his lips and leaned in to whisper in her ear, “Where is your favourite place to be kissed?”

Shivering, she shifted her hips, moving her hips down against him, softly. “The back of my neck.”

He brushed his hand to caress the back of her neck as he kissed up her jaw. Brushing her hair aside, he nipped at her ear. “Then I want to kiss you there.”

She gasped and he met her mouth again and slowly kissed her, memorizing the inside of her mouth and the shape of her teeth. Sitting there with her made him realize that it was impossible to resist moments like this. The days would always be long and hard and these softer, intimate moments had to carry him through the harder, brutal times. It would always be new for her and he could not take her for granted. She was slowly grinding against him and he shuddered. He imagined what she was feeling, brushing against his erection through their undergarments. She ran her hands through his hair and sighed when he grasped the clasp of her bra, starting to undo it.

“You’re so beautiful,” he sat back to look at her. In the low light of the room, he tried to memorize her face. “I only want to see you like this.”

“Alive?”

He briefly shut his eyes, and a flash of her on the roof crossed his mind. “Yeah.”

“Hey,” she said softly. “I’m sorry, I…”

“It’s okay,” he pulled her closer to kiss her again. He slipped off her bra and gently caressed his hands up her body to brush against her breasts. His hands looked huge against her body. Her breasts were firm but soft, drawing him into her scent.

Her eyes fluttered shut as he brushed against one of her nipples. “God, Kylo.”

He sat up, gripped her back and leaned her down onto the bed in one swift motion. He kissed up her neck, her legs wrapping around his back as he left a trail of gentle marks up her face. Time seemed to slow as he tasted her, wanting her to need him as much as he needed her. She thrust up towards him and made small, low noises as he bit her ear lightly. He was taking in every motion, every touch, locking it away in a hidden part of his mind that no one could touch; the monster hunting them could take her, but he couldn’t take his memories of being with her. Her hands moved down to slowly inch her panties off her body, biting her lip when he glanced up to meet her eyes.
He felt the sudden rush at the idea of being inside her again and wanted to delay the feeling, taking several slow, even breaths. But her hands wanted more; she greedily tugged at the edge of his boxers, trying to coax them down. Just the brush of her hands on his sides made it hard to hold back, but he needed it to last. He never knew when it would all blow up in his face.

“Please,” she whined as he focused on kissing her, almost ignoring her hands. “I need you inside me.”

“Slowly.”

“Yes.”

He shifted off of her and she quickly pulled down her underwear fully, watching him as he did the same. He always had to remind himself that every time would be their first time together, for her. She could just be saying these things to make him feel better; maybe she didn’t want him?

Standing to her knees, she moved towards the edge of the bed to look up at him, touching his sides again. The way that her stomach dipped towards the shape of her sex urged him on to taste it again. But she was focused on him. The parts of his body that he hated felt good underneath her hands. He brushed his hand across her face, tracing her lips. She slightly opened her mouth, lightly nipping at the tip of his finger.

“Ow.” He teased.

She smiled at him, tilting her head in his hand to nuzzle her nose against his palm. “You’re gorgeous.”

He bent down to meet her mouth again, guiding her back against the bed. What if this was all in his head? What if none of this was real? It felt real; she was drawing him into losing himself in a moment that he wanted to stretch on for eternity. He needed to touch her. She whimpered lightly, as he ran his hands up her sides to feel her firm ribs. This was always the part that made him want to take time. Beneath him, she was open and warm and looked at him with shining eyes. Could this be real, what she was showing him? She parted her legs and he met her gaze. She slowly nodded, taking in the length of his body in the low light. He slid his hand down her stomach, keeping his eyes locked on her as he felt down the light hair that kissed her mound. He lightly rubbed her clit and heard the low sound of her breath catching in her throat. With blunt fingers, he shifted his hand to feel her wetness, dipping his finger into her as gently as he could. The sound she made told him that she was ready. When his hands left her body, he couldn’t wait any longer. He shifted, taking himself in his hand and nudging her legs open. He could almost hear her heart beat as her eyes closed and he carefully entered her. She hissed lightly at the head of his penis and he again had to hold back from fully thrusting into her. It was like she was made for him. Her legs were toned and strong but she was warm and soft in the right places. Wet and soft, sweet and tender.

He was going too slow. Her legs tangled around his back and forced him to enter her and he grunted at the sensation of being inside her again, fully. His thrusts were gentle at first but he lost himself in her body, grabbing and touching her, caressing and kissing her. She was wet for him and his motions; he was doing this right. Each time he entered her, he felt his body turn to fire. Lifting her hips, she guided him into a better angle. Sitting up, he took in how she looked, panting beneath him as he gradually started to thrust harder into her. Her mouth was parted and her eyes were closed. He loved her and today, he’d learned more about her. Tomorrow, or the next today, he’d learn more. He wanted to earn her heart too.

He quickly drove his cock into her, moving in and out and taking in the tenseness and the softness inside her. Her hands were reaching wildly for him, starting to gasp as he hit a certain spot inside her. There, he’d found it. He quickly thrust into her, feeling the resistance from her vagina. Her
body tensed and she squeezed her eyes shut.

“Oh, God, Kylo.”

He slowed down, gently easing her legs off of him. “Hey, can you...turn over.”

She looked up at him and he earned a fairly steamy look. “You did promise to kiss the back of my neck.”

She rolled over, onto her hands and knees and he stroked himself at the sight of her spread out before him. He wouldn’t last long.

Entering her again wasn’t as careful or slow. He leaned forward, pressing his lips to the back of her neck.

“I love you.”

She moaned, low. She gasped out her words as he thrust into her again. “You make me feel loved.”

Even after a few deep strokes, he couldn’t keep the pace going. He gripped her hips and traced down her back. The sensation rolled through his body before he could stop it.

“Rey, fuck, I’m...”

“Do it, yes. God, you’re so great.”

He came at her words, holding her hips against him. Spots of light crashed at the corners of his closed eyes and he enjoyed the wave of the feeling. She sighed lowly when he left her body.

She rolled over and he took in how she looked after making love. Her eyes roam up his body, finding new places she hadn’t seen before, and she smiled up at him.

“That was amazing,” she played with his hand as he knelt over her. “Is it always like this, the first time?”

“Yeah,” he said, not knowing what else to say. “I can’t explain how much I love you.”

Sighing, she quietly and gingerly left the bed, brushing his hand as she moved by him. He glanced to watch her ass as she moved to the washroom. She shot him a look over her shoulder and winked.

Part of him just wanted to order room service and stay in the safety of their room. But he realized that whatever was going to happen today, was just going to happen. Taking her out for dinner would make him nervous, but also would make him feel like a person.

She’d returned, picking her underwear off the floor.

“Was that okay?” He asked.

“That was great, I just told you,” she smiled, putting on her bra. She seemed receptive, but also distant. He’d messed something up. “What’s the plan now? I’m starting to get hungry after...that.”

“I’m going to get cleaned up and then we’ll go out,” he moved off the bed, kissing her forehead after he passed by. “It’s...I’d rather stay here but...”

“It would be nice not to hide,” she went to put on her dress. “Whatever happens, Kylo, we had this. And it was beautiful.”
After washing and dressing, Kylo saw how Rey was sitting on the edge of the bed, looking oddly forlorn. Her confidence was suddenly gone. He had made mistakes again. “What’s wrong?”

“Kylo, I’m sorry for what you’re going through. If I die every day, that can’t be easy,” she absently rubbed her arm and bit her lip. “I’m sorry that I don’t remember. I liked what just happened, and you were so gentle with me, but this is happening so quickly. I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t apologize, Rey,” he sat down next to her. “I’m…it will never get easier, but today will help. We have a strategy and a plan. And a team we can trust. I don’t know how many more todays there will be, but as long as I can spend them with you, I’ll come out of this okay.”

She looked up and her face brightened a bit. “Can we stay partners and date?”

“We’ll make it work,” he nodded. “Come on, let’s go eat.”

It was late evening when they found a decent restaurant. He ordered them both three-course meals and a wine package. Might as well make the last day of her life a nice one.

“Kylo, this is expensive,” she whispered as the waiter left.

“It won’t matter when it’s today again,” he shrugged. “Besides, it’s my mom’s card.”

“Why do you have that?”

The waiter returned with the first of the wines. He nodded after tasting it and then raised his filled glass to his partner. “To tomorrow.”

“To tomorrow.” She sipped her wine and grinned at the glass. “This is good. But why do you have your mom’s card?”

“She worries about me,” he replied. “I haven’t really talked to her in a while. She lives upstate, mostly retired.”

“What about your dad?”

He forgot he hadn’t told her today. “I…my father was Han Solo. It’s strange, I just had a dream about him and the last time I talked to him. He was a cop and he worked hard. He was…he was dedicated. When I was growing up, he was always working on something. I always thought he would come home and then when I was nine, he was killed on duty during a robbery. I never really knew him, but I still miss him.”

“I…I miss my parents too, even though they were terrible,” she studied her glass. “It’s strange to miss something you never really had.”

Their first course came and they talked about how they grew up and the high and low points of their childhoods. He managed to laugh at her first experiences at an American high school and she rolled her eyes when he was critical of his first partner as a detective.

“No wonder he retired,” she grinned.

The second course and more wine arrived and they turned back to the case. It was still hard to untangle all of the possible paths, but she was agreeing with the plan to find the children and dig into specifically what the parents had seen in the days leading up to the abduction. They knew what one suspect looked like and that would give them some hint of what was happening.
“But we have to figure out who the other one is,” he said, finishing a glass of red wine. “He sends them out after us but since we’re not as predictable now…”

“Yes, and we will,” she nodded. “Kylo, this has been a very nice day.”

He met her eyes and sighed. In a few hours, she’d be dead. It wasn’t fair.

Dessert was a small truffle and dessert wine. They ate the final part of the meal in relative silence. He was lost in thought about how to keep her safe and try to stop the ending they were both dreading.

“Maybe I shouldn’t tell you about dying tomorrow,” he said. “Would that make it easier?”

She finished the last of her wine and thought it over. “Maybe try it? But don’t look at me the way you just did. I’ll know something is wrong and ask you about it. And you have a hard time lying to me without feeling guilty.”

He slowly nodded. “I can try, at least.”

“But always tell me about the loop,” she said, firmly. “I think that it would freak me out more if you knew everything and didn’t at least give some sort of explanation.”

“All right,” he smiled. “You’re so demanding.”

“You’re one to talk.”

They paid and left, watching the waiter’s eyes get wide at the tip.

It was nearly 10 p.m. as they made their way back to the boardwalk and the beach. He held her hand and put his suit coat over her shoulders from the chill. That’s when she noticed his holster and stiffened to step away from him.

“You brought your gun and I couldn’t?”

“Rey, I…is it unfair that I want to try to keep you safe? Just…one more minute with you would mean so much to me,” he reached for her again as she frowned. She took his hand, but looked out over the water. The betrayal only went so far.

“I guess I can understand that,” she squeezed his hand and looked back at him. “I’m okay.”

They found their spot on the sand again, surprised to see the towel still resting where they left it.

“Our lucky day,” she smiled lightly.

They sat down and watched the waves hitting the water, quietly spending the last couple of hours together. It was silent on the beach, except for the unchangeable nature around them. He’d occasionally kiss or hug her, just to make sure she was still alive. He started feeling more apprehensive when his watch clicked over to 11.30. There was no one. They were alone.

She sat up, feeling his arms tense around her. “What are we waiting for?”

“Someone, anyone.”

His eyes scanned the beach again and his heart fell and his arms tightened around her.

Striding towards them, angrily and determined, was a black-clad figure. He stood and she
followed, but he pushed her behind him.

It was 11.45 when the masked man stood close enough to hear him breathing heavily.

“Not today,” Kylo tried not to sound pleading. “Just give us one day.”

He shook his head, not speaking. Kylo pulled out his gun and aimed it at the man.

“What are you?” She yelled. He could feel her hand on his back. “Why are you doing this?”

“You tried to run again, but you still made mistakes. He found you,” his voice was still altered. He pulled out a gun and aimed it at them both. “Either she dies or they both die. You didn’t follow his directions! His clues! Our mutual friend is not happy, Ben Solo.”

Kylo shot twice, catching him in the shoulder and the side. He bent over, but aimed wildly, firing at them. Kylo felt a sudden, sharp burning pain in his side and instantly felt it hard to breathe. He managed one last shot, hitting him in the head and he dropped.

He grabbed at his side, wheezing. “Rey, take off the mask. Tell me what he looks like.”

She went from trying to hold him to the masked man. She ripped off the mask. “His face is covered in tattoos! Red and black.”

Kneeling, he tried to catch his breath. His shirt was slowly soaking with warm blood. His blood, for once, not hers. He stared at his hand, remembering how her blood looked while studying his own. She reached his side and took off his suit coat, putting pressure on the wound.

“No, no, no.” She gasped.

“What time…?” he coughed, tasting copper. Fuck.

She checked her watch. “11.58. Kylo, you can’t die. Please don’t let me wake up tomorrow without you.”

A strange voice broke the moment. “Don’t worry, you won’t.”

The sound of a gun stunned his ears as he saw a bullet hit her in the middle of the forehead.

He felt tears slip down his face as he looked up at the stars. The redheaded man, Hux, filled his blurring vision. He saw the gun being aimed again and closed his eyes, welcoming the end to the day.
Chapter Summary

The killer gets revenge after Kylo and Rey's day at the beach. Again, see notes for warnings.

Chapter Notes

Ahh! Thanks for the recs and the comments and kudos. It's taking a lot of work to keep this both original, exciting, and not let it start to drag. I have the rest of the days mostly sketched out, so I hope that I can keep the pace going. You're all awesome for sticking with me.

Day 15

Shiver. Jolt. And he was awake before his alarm again. But this time it was only 5.58. Kylo Ren frowned at the loss of the time. He guessed it had something to do with basically doing nothing to stop him, but quickly shrugged it off to lunge for the door as his alarm clicked on.

He heard his radio in the distance as he threw open the door to catch Finn.

“Whoa, hey,” Finn stammered, about to knock on the door. “How did you know I would be out here, man?”

He realized that he was breathing heavily and his expression was wild. He had moved so quickly he didn’t feel the lingering ache in his head and shoulder. Memories of being shot, he considered. Stilling his face, he smoothed his hair. “I’m sorry for scaring you. Come inside, I need to talk to you about the man you met.”

His eyes were wide as he stepped inside, cautiously. “Look, my name’s Finn. I work in the newspaper stand downstairs. You pass by me every day, but you’ve never said hi or nothing. Some dude in black gave me $50 to slip a note under your door and run. That’s all.”

“And I knew you were going to do that,” he motioned towards the kitchen. “Come in, I have some calls to make.”

This part of the day always went the smoothest and that made it easier to step back into the loop. But as he spoke, he could still hear the distant waves of the ocean and every time he closed his eyes, he saw the hole in her forehead as she slumped forward. He still felt cold from the sand. The vacant look in her eyes always haunted him after death. No, don’t think about it, he shook his head.

First, Dameron. He carefully talked to the man with patience and respect. He seemed to be confused by the tone more then the words, but agreed to stick around.
Then he called Rey and his heart beat faster at her voice.

“Yeah, Niima?”

“Hi,” he said softly. “Are you having a good morning?”

“Kylo? What’s going on?”

“Can you come by my place as soon as you can? I’ve got a lead and I really need to talk to you,” he almost smiled talking to her. “I’ll text you the address.”

“Okay, but you’re starting to scare me.”

He shook his head. “No, I’ll explain everything when you get here.”

Hanging up, he quickly sent her the message. He did feel more at ease after the previous day, despite how it ended. A new rule would have to be not ever using any credit cards.

He called in the regular team and set the day in motion. The crow again hit his window, making Finn jump. Moving to the kitchen, he started making tea when he heard the other man clear his throat.

“So, I’m not really following what’s going on here,” Finn asked, removing his gloves. “Why did that guy want me to give you that note? How did you know about the note?”

Shrugging, he went to move the chair near the door again for her bag. “It’s something that’s hard to explain. I will tell you when Rey gets here. I know you guys are friends and that you work hard for your home neighbourhood. If you can trust her, you can trust me.”

Rey came jogging up to the door and dropped her bag. He smiled brightly at her and she seemed to be confused by the look. She shut the door behind her and stepped towards the kitchen.

“Kylo, what’s going on? Are you sick or something?” She noticed Finn and shook her head. “What are you doing here?”

“Ask him,” Finn shrugged. “He seems to know everything.”

He wanted to hug her but she looked too suspicious of how he was looking at her. She carefully took a seat at the table.

“You look good,” he smiled lightly. “I didn’t know that you ran here.”

“I do…” she started. “Please tell me what’s going on.”

“I do…” she started. “Please tell me what’s going on.”

“So, it’s like this…” He was about to explain the loop and the day when an angry knock at the door interrupted him. The team couldn’t be here this early. He instantly panicked and was frozen between the kitchen and his bedroom when the door burst open. He always missed something.

A dark-haired man, his face covered in tattoos stalked into the room. The other two scrambled, knocking over chairs. Rey was also blocked from getting her weapon. He trailed a gun on them before turning to Kylo.

“He says you must be punished for not following the rules,” the man growled. “I was supposed to watch you, but he said that you need to follow the clues and not ignore them.”

He slowly moved to shield Rey. She had Finn blocked into a corner. His mind was scrambling,
trying to draw on training rather than the pure panic of the moment. “You don’t have to do this,” she said. “We haven’t done anything.”

“He said that you did,” he pointed the weapon at her and Kylo took his chance. He charged the stranger and managed to tackle him to the ground, reaching wildly for the gun.

“Rey! My gun! Beside the bed!”

He focused on fighting the man, but saw her dart into his room. The stranger tossed fists and gripped as his clothes, but all he felt was his heart drumming in his ears. He had to stop this; he had to stop him. He heard the click of his weapon being engaged as her footsteps joined them in the scuffle. He had the man pinned to the ground now, but the gun was still in his hand. Suddenly, the man kicked up, knocking him in the head with an elbow. He struggled again, trying to get his hands on the gun. The man kicked at him and he wasn’t quick enough to recover.

The gun went off, shocking his eardrums. There was a sharp pain against his shoulder and he tried to ignore it, still struggling for the weapon. It was only a nick, but the pain still shot through him. It hurt him enough that he lost focus for a fraction of a second. The man head butted him and he was knocked to the side. That was all it took.

His head swimming, he tried to get up from the floor. He saw Rey take aim and shoot twice, hitting the stranger in the shoulder and the side.

But he continued to advance, firing at her at close range. The smell of smoke and burnt flesh filled the air and he called out to her. He shot her in the stomach and she hunched over. Filled with pain and rage, he forced himself up and dive for her bag. He pulled out the gun and caught the man in the back of the head. He didn't hear anything but the red mist of brain matter sprayed over his kitchen and the body was dead before it met the floor.

Breathing heavily, he called for Finn to dial 911, not hearing his own voice as it left his body. He knew that the team would be there soon, but he needed an ambulance. He was yelling, but still couldn't hear it. No, no, no.

He got to Rey and she was bleeding, but not heavily. It didn’t look too bad. Maybe it missed everything? He pressed his hands on the wound and smoothed her hair. She was taking deep and laboured breaths, her eyes wild.

“What…what was that Kylo? Who is that?”

“It’s one of the accomplices,” he whispered. “Don’t talk. Just concentrate on your breathing, okay, Rey, sweetheart?”

She met his eyes and nodded. He pressed hard on the wound and she was still with him. That’s what he needed; his hands were on her and he could do this. He could save her. He had to. In the dull hinges of his mind, he heard the team arrive behind him, but the sound had all but greyed out. They scrambled around her and he wouldn’t let her go. The ambulance crew appeared out of the corner of his vision and finally stepped aside. He looked over at Finn, who looked ashen. Dameron stood beside him and shook his head. Maybe he was speaking; it was hard to tell. Everything had went wrong because he had taken a day off. He didn’t even get a chance to tell her.

He took the stairs as they brought her down in the elevator. Everything was happening too quickly, but also too slowly. He beat the ambulance crew to the door and leaned against the rig. He felt damp, sweaty and bloody. How could he be so careless? This was his was of showing power. Either follow the rules or get shot. When the crew was finally there, loading her bed, he saw
another distant black form watching them. He was there to drop the girl and taunt them.

“Hey, we need to go,” the EMT said.

He rode in the ambulance with her, refusing to go anywhere else. There was nothing else in the world except her. It was only colours and blues, dull noises that took his focus away from her face. Breathing into a mask, she seemed to be stabilizing. The attendant was focused on her wound, pushing against Kylo and knocking him back into the moment.

He squeezed her hand, wiping a tear from her cheek. “It’ll be okay.”

She still looked confused, drugged, but still trying to figure out what had just happened. Nodding, she closed her eyes.

“Will she be okay?” He asked the attendant, who was works to keep the bleeding from continuing.

“We’ll find out when we get to the hospital, okay?” The young man said quickly, fixing her IV. “Just talk to her, keep her awake.”

He bent down to whisper in her ear. “Rey, I know you won’t believe me, but I know you. We’ve talked about so many things. I trust you with my life and I need you so, so much. You’ve made me a better person. Rey, you like sugar in your tea and you hate math. You love the beach and the colour yellow. And you like having the back of your neck kissed.”

Her eyes fluttered open, meeting his. She rasped through the mask, “Kylo, it hurts.”

“I know, I’m sorry, but I’m here.” He kissed her IV free hand. “Rey, I love you, don’t die. Please live. I need you, I need you so much.”

She nodded, keeping her eyes locked on his. Trying to keep her breath even, she lightly squeezed his hand and smiled, barely quirking her lips. She slowly removed her mask and he leaned forward to kiss her. She was slightly cold and her mouth was a little limp, tasting faintly of iron, but she was still her.

“Please keep the mask on,” the EMT scolded.

He helped slide it back on her face and tried to smile at her. This wasn’t fair, none of it was.

Reaching the hospital, she was pulled away from him. He was told firmly to wait outside as she was prepared for surgery, shoved from one room to another as he dumbly followed every step until someone forcibly set him down. He could only slump against a wall after resolutely punching it. He could only hear dull echoes and the fake lighting twisted in his eyes. Had he been here before?

A nurse came over to check on him, shining a light in his eyes and gently touching his arm. It was like falling from a great height and landing hard when the other person reached out to him.

“We need to stitch that up, Detective Ren,” she said softly. “And you might have a concussion.”

He shook his head. “I don’t want to leave her.”

She nodded, frowning. “They’ll be taking her up soon. It’s much more serious than we thought.”

He blinked back tears, bubbling up from his broken spirit. “It’s all my fault.”

“No, no, it’s not,” she shook her head. “You put pressure on the wound. You saved her from losing a lot of blood.”
The door slammed open and they wheeled her out. He was on his feet, following after. She looked so small in the bed and they wouldn’t let him near her, no matter how much he insisted. They reached the operating room and they finally let him hold her hand.

“Be quick, we have work to do.” The doctor said, disappearing behind the swinging door.

“Rey, hey, it’s me,” he said, touching her cheek.

She blinked awake, still under the mask. She smiled at him lightly, her lips a dull blue.

“Fight this, Rey. Stay alive for me. Please, love,” he kissed her forehead and gripped her hand.

She managed a weak nod, reaching up to stroke his cheek gently.

And then they took her away. He stood in the doorway, feeling lost.

He lingered outside the room, feeling empty, for over an hour. People walked by, but he didn’t notice them.

Eventually, the same nurse from before gently led him to nearby chairs and made him sit down and take off his shirt. He winced as she cleaned the wound and prepared to stitch him up.

“Thank you nurse…” he glanced at her nametag. “Windu?”

He looked up to meet her brown eyes. She nodded. “Yes, Alice Windu. Now sit still.”

“So you… Mathilda’s mother?” He asked, carefully.

She sadly nodded. “Yes, yes I am.”

“We…we’re working on that case. We just found her this morning, what are you doing here? Shouldn’t you be at home with your husband?” She must have just found out about her daughter minutes ago; he checked his watch. Almost 8.30. He felt dread spread across his chest. There were no coincidences today.

The woman waited until she finished the final stitch before she kept talking. “Detective, today is the worst day of my life. That…that’s what took me so long to come to you. They called me and told me they found her less than an hour ago. It was the worst call of my life. But it’s also the worst day of yours and your partner’s lives too. Every day is the worst day of someone’s life. I can’t help my daughter, but I can work to help others not have the worst days of their life. You need to catch this horrible man. He’s hurting so many people and so many families.”

He nodded as she applied a bandage over his stitches. He slipped his shirt back on and looked at the distant operating room door.

She left before he could ask her anything about her daughter. He was alone again, waiting for any news.

The hours painfully ticked by and eventually a familiar form came to sat down beside him. The DA filled the seat vacated by Nurse Windu.

“The captain said that you would be here,” the older man said, adjusting his suit jacket.

Kylo had to fight against his urge to punch the man and simply nodded. His shirt was still wet with both of their blood and this man was looming over him again. He wished that he was there with anyone else but him, but also realized that he needed to take the opportunities that were given to
him. Rey needed him to do that.

“Sir, I know that you knew my parents,” he said slowly. “And I know that these missing kids are screwing up your election campaign. We’re trying our best.”

“Do you know who the man was in your apartment?” He asked, leaning back in the uncomfortable hospital chair. “Do you know how he got there?”

Kylo shook his head, “The murderer sent him. I’m somehow his target too.”

He was still suspicious of the man. He wasn’t sure yet if he could be trusted. Sighing, he realized that he needed to figure out a way to test if he knew about the loop or not. But no matter what he came up with, he could think of a way for the man to lie to him. There was no way to get that information.

Then he remembered how Rey, Finn, and the others would repeat things they would say, but out of order. It was like their thoughts could be reordered by events, but they would still say the same things. Always the same people.

“Is there any point to this conversation?” He slowly said, anger rising, remembering the first day. “Sir?”

“Just that you are an important part of this investigation,” he replied. “So watch your temper.”

The tone was the same. The words were the same. Either he was trying to outwit him, or he didn’t know about the loop.

Kylo met the other man’s eyes. His mouth was set in a firm line.

He took another chance. “Has anyone been threatening you, sir?”

He narrowed his eyes. “How could you possibly know about that?”

“Has your office been broken into recently?” He continued to press.

The suspicion remained on the other man’s face. “Someone went through my desk this morning. Again, detective, how did you know about that?”

Kylo’s heart thundered in his ears. Palpatine wasn’t the killer; he was also a target.

“Would you believe me if I told you what he left in your desk?”

Palpatine frowned deeper but nodded.

“A notepad and a map.”

The man actually stood up from his chair to shout at him. “What the hell is going on?”

“Sir, I think that the killer might be threatening you as well,” Kylo shook his head. “I don’t know why, but I suggest not going to mass today.”

“That does…why would he be threatening me? What do you know about that? There have been strange messages and letters and phone calls since the children started being murdered.”

“The election,” Kylo started. “What do you know about your opponent?”
“Ben Kenobi?” Palpatine grimaced. “He favours more Democratic values than mine. It’s his first time running against me and I doubt he will win if you can catch that damned killer without shooting first and asking questions later.”

Kylo rubbed the back of his neck. More damned clues and no Rey with her notebook.

Palpatine seemed to pick up on his exasperation and his look softened. “I came here to give my regards to your partner. I’ll be back at my office later today. I want you to come talk to me once she’s out of surgery and recovering.”

He could only nod and the man walked away. He could see the ADA, Holdo, waiting at the end of the hallway. Either he was a master manipulator, or he genuinely was concerned and being endangered somehow. Kylo could only absorb the information and wait to run it by Rey.

Too many hours later, a doctor emerged from the room and he rose to meet him. Kylo couldn’t manage to sleep the entire time and felt dead on his feet. He looked at him seriously, motioning for him to sit down again. He refused and asked when he could see her.

“Is she okay?” He said. “I need to talk to her.”

“You’re her partner? Detective Ren?”

“Yes, and her boyfriend,” he tried to look behind the doctor towards the door. “Please, I just need to talk to her.”

The doctor’s face told him everything before he even began to speak. “Detective, there was much more damage than we thought. The bullet tore into her spleen and there was a great deal of internal bleeding. She didn’t make it. I’m so sorry. We tried our best.”

He shook his head and a low cry escaped his mouth. “No.”

“You can say goodbye. It’s not very clean in there, but you can see her if you want.”

The room was empty when he was brought inside, left alone by tired hands in silence. Blood and tubes and trays were scattered everywhere. She looked like she was just asleep, like she had been on his chest the day before. But she was gone again.

“Rey, I’m sorry,” he said, reaching to touch her face. It was still warm, mocking him. “But guess what? I have more clues. There will be more clues for you tomorrow.”

She didn't answer, but he saw the hint of a tear that had ghosted down her cheek. She had been in pain. He brought that to her. He was always going to get her killed. The pain welled in his chest as tears started to fall, burning hot against his cheeks. He cried, touching her still-warm face.

Eventually the nurse, Windu, came to take him away from her. He couldn’t breathe suddenly and had to sit down, forgetting what balance was. The nurse guided him back to the same chair as he sobbed into her shoulder. She stroked his back and again he was reminded that she had lost someone today: someone also innocent in all of this mess.

“Ma’am, I can’t bring back your daughter,” he slowly got himself together. “But I will stop him for you and for her.”

“And your partner.” She patted his hand.

“Tell me about your daughter,” he said softly. “What was she like?”
“She is…she was a ball of energy. My husband is a schoolteacher and she was in his class this year and now he understands why her other teachers complain so much. She was always singing and dancing around the house. It was only the day that she was taken that seemed…different. She moped around the house and didn’t want to do anything. I think that’s why I let her go play outside,” she shook her head. “I just want my little girl back, detective.”

A tear slipped down her cheek and he took her hand.

“Was there anything else you remember? Before she was taken?”

She shook her head. “The other detectives already asked that yesterday. But I found something this morning that I didn’t notice until I was getting ready for work. It was on top of my desk, something that she drew. It’s the last thing she ever did so I kept it with me.”

From her pocket, she pulled out a piece of paper. In messy pencil crayon, there was a drawing of four figures. One had bright orange hair: Hux. One was had black and red marks all over his face: the tattooed man. But in the middle was a black figure with a face he didn’t recognize. He was tall and thin and in no way resembled Palpatine’s rather rotund form. The hair was coloured silver and his hand was outstretched towards the final character, a tiny self-portrait of the artist herself.

She’d seen them all. She’d seen the man that would kill her.

He tried to memorize everything about the picture.

“You can take it if it helps your case,” the nurse started and he shook his head.

“No, keep it, it’s the last piece you have of her.”

She nodded and returned the drawing to her pocket. He didn’t want to tell her who the other men were.

“Will it…will it ever feel okay again, detective?”

He looked up at the operating room that held Rey’s body. “I hope it does.”

And he was left alone again. Finally, he stood and left the hospital, heading back to the office. He didn’t bother to change his shirt and a dozen voices fussed over him when he walked in with intense eyes. He didn’t respond and instead went straight to the lab. Dameron wasn’t there, but his assistant gave him his number. He had no idea what time it was and finally checked a clock on the wall. How was it 7 p.m.?

“Hello?” A groggy voice asked. Kylo figured out where he must be and went to the crash room.

Dameron answered the door, looking bleary eyed and holding his phone. “Holy shit, Kylo. What the hell happened this morning?”

“Do they have an ID on the shooter?” Kylo asked, entering the room to sit on the opposite bunk. Dameron followed to stand beside him, confused.

“No, not yet. Those tattoos are distinctive so we should be able to track him through the system. It looks like some Mexican gang shit so we’re going through some international databases. How…how’s Rey?”

He just shook his head, feeling tears rising again. He pushed them down. “It…it was worse than they thought.”
“Shit, Kylo, I’m sorry.” Dameron lightly gripped his shoulder. “I…I don’t know what to say.”

“Say that you got your nephew this morning.”

The other man sat across from him and nodded. “Yeah, yeah. I got him to her ex’s. I managed to slip away from the mess that was your apartment. I had no idea what to do with the note I found there so I called it in. They got a call about another boy in the park and we also found a picture of you and Rey getting into the ambulance. What is going on?”

If he couldn’t talk to Rey, he had to trust Dameron.

“Look, Poe, normally I tell this to Rey but…but she’s gone,” he took a deep breath. “I’m reliving the same day. Today. Over and over again. It’s, what, Day 15? The killer is leading us around, threatening me and taking children. He used your nephew as a distraction initially, but if he knows that I keep talking to you, that might change things. I can’t figure out what he knows just yet. We’ve gotten close to him a few times but he either catches us or I mess something up.”

Dameron just blinked. “So you knew you were going to be attacked this morning and just let it happen?”

He quickly shook his head. “No, no, that was…he was getting revenge because Rey and I took the day off yesterday. Or the other today. The…Day 14. If we don’t chase him, he gets angry.”

“Is it the same day for her too?”

Again, he had to shake his head no. “For her…she just dies every day. No matter what I do, she dies. This is actually the second time she’s been attacked in my apartment but I…they thought I did it that day. Today, Finn was a witness.”

“Jesus,” Dameron rubbed his face. “So, no one but the killer and you know about the whatever, time loop?”

“Yes, we’re the only ones who can change things,” he nodded. “There’s something about the children that we were supposed to track down today, but we were interrupted.”

“Look, okay, let’s just pretend that I believe you for a second,” Dameron said, tiredly. “Other than knowing about my nephew, and the fact that your partner is dead, why are you telling me any of this.”

“I trust you,” Kylo replied, instantly. “You…we have a team now. You, me, Finn, Rey, Rose at the courthouse…I thought at first that you might be a suspect but then we figured that part out. I also thought that Rey and I could handle it on our own. She’s a great partner and a beautiful person and I don’t deserve her.”

He swallowed. “So what can we do about this today before it’s…today again?”

Kylo slowly stood. “I’m going to go talk to the Jinns about their son.”

“Yeah, that’s probably a good idea, whoever they are,” Dameron said, also standing. He reached for a backpack hidden in the corner of the room. “You’ll probably need a new shirt for that and maybe, I’m just saying, maybe wash up a bit. You’re kind of…bloody.”

He accepted the shirt with a small smile. “Thanks, Poe.”

“No problem.”
He rinsed off as best he could in the small washroom of the station and tried to look somewhat less crazed and more presentable. Dameron’s shirt fit tight but it did the job. It felt hollow to not have Rey by his side as he left the station in a taxi, after receiving the boy’s address from a rather reluctant Mundi.

He was reading about the other DA candidate, Ben Kenobi, on his phone when he arrived to a simple brownstone. He didn’t bother with his phone today, prepared to die at any minute. He almost welcomed it as he frowned at the image on his phone; the candidate had a distinguished face and greying brown hair. He mulled over whether he could be a suspect as he rung the bell.

He recognized the tired eyes of the mother when she answered the door.

“Mrs Jinn? I’m sorry to bother you so late. I’m detective Kylo Ren, I have some questions about your son,” he apologized, showing his badge.

She shook her head. “No, no, come in. The other detectives just left. We’re…we’re probably not going to sleep tonight. Do you have anything new for us?”

She led him into the kitchen, where her husband sat, holding an empty coffee cup and staring into space. He immediately stood when he saw them enter the room.

He extended his hand, grimacing when he noticed blood still stained under his nails. “Detective Ren.”

“Mats Jinn, you’ve met my wife Kristina,” he sat down again. “Do you have any word on Quirin?”

“Would you like some coffee?” Kristina asked. He nodded, needing something other than adrenaline to keep him going.

“I believe that I might have a new perspective on the case that the others may not have had,” he accepted the warm mug and took a long drink. He had to push the feeling of missing Rey out of his mind and tried to focus on the case. “Was Quirin acting differently this morning? Before you went to the park?”

Kristina sighed, thinking through the day again. Mats poured himself more coffee and slowly nodded.

“Yes, now that you say it,” Mats shook his head. “He’s been sick the last few days so I guess we thought he was just tired from being home from school. He complained this morning that he kept having nightmares that he was going to be taken away from us. And that the TV was boring.”

Kristina nodded. “I think that’s why we took him to the zoo. Just so he could…think about something else.”

Kylo had pulled out his notebook and carefully writing everything down, feeling the pang of Rey being absent in his chest as he did. He had to follow her plan, even without her.

“Did he draw anything?”

“We…the others went through his room, but I haven’t really been up there,” Kristina looked at her hands, almost in guilt.

“Ma’am, I’m so sorry to ask, but can you please go check for me,” he said, gently. “It’s important.”

She shook her head in light agreement and left the room. Alone with the father, he took a deep
breath and closed his eyes. She was cold and dead right now. She wasn’t beside him. He felt numbness wash over him as he looked back to his notebook. This would be the longest day without her in a while.

“I’m…I’m sorry for asking, but are you okay?” Mats asked. “There’s…your arm is bleeding.”

He glanced at his shoulder and swore. “Yeah, I was shot this morning. One of the accomplices of the killer attacked me and my partner.”

“Is he okay?”

“She,” he corrected, gently. “And no. She died this afternoon.”

“I’m so, so sorry,” Mats frowned. Why were these people, also experiencing loss, showing him so much concern? They had likely lost a child and the man sitting across from him was looking at him with genuine sympathy.

“Thank you, but there’s nothing I can do about it now,” he replied. “The only thing I can do to make it up to her is to find your son and stop this man.”

Mats nodded. “But you have to take care of yourself too. We…we haven’t been coping well so this might be advice I can use too.”

“There will be time for that tomorrow,” Kylo said with a small nod. “I will solve this, Mats.”

He other man could only meet his eyes and shake his head as Kristina returned with several sheets of paper in her hand. She looked like she had been crying and moved to sit next to her husband, taking his hand and looking down.

“Normally, he draws dinosaurs and spaceships,” she said, her voice a near whisper. “These are…strange.”

He looked through the paper and felt his chest tighten. In a younger hand, drawn with cluttered felt pen, again were the three figures with a boy. They weren’t as neatly portrayed as the other drawing, but the middle figure was again tall and thin with brown-grey hair. The other piece of paper was a mass of green, probably the park. A thick, black stick figure was in the middle of the green mess.

The final piece of paper wasn’t anything he recognised. It was just a child’s version of a house. But the grey-haired stick figure was inside of it. There was a moon in the sky rather than the sun. The boy had drawn himself lying on the ground.

“Kristina, thank you. Thank you so much. This…this is what we needed to find,” he put them back on the table and finished his coffee. “I really appreciate your time.”

He moved to stand and she spotted the blood seeping through his shirt and dripping down his arm.

“Wait, detective, I’ll get you a bandage. Come upstairs,” she motioned for him to follow her. He groaned at having anyone take care of him, but let her fix the wound after removing the loaned shirt.

She cleaned around the stitches with precision and he asked her a question that had started to poke at his mind.

“Are you a nurse?” He asked.
She shook her head and he thought that he had lost another lead before she answered. “I’m finishing nursing school next year. I waited to go back until Quirin was older.”

His mind was racing as she finished her work. She frowned and checked his pulse.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, I…It’s the case, Kristina. I might have found another connection,” he said, quickly. “I’m going to save your son, I have to.”

She hugged him then and he sagged into her arms. “It’s been a long, hard day.”

He nodded. “Yes, yes it has.”

Slowly, she released him and he put the shirt back on. There were so many parts to this day that he had to tell Rey about. He almost thought about tossing himself off a bridge to reset the day, but he forced himself not to. He left the Jinns, thanking them again, and told the taxi driver to take him to the beach.

Watching the moonlit waves, as the clock neared 2 a.m., he could almost feel her next to him.
Day 16

Chapter Summary

Kylo and Rey make progress, but also learn something about the children. Read the tags for warnings.

Day 16

It was 5.53 when Kylo awoke with his usual shiver and jolt. The beach still echoed in his ears and his room was cold, settling around him like the echo of a ghost. His fingertips felt numb and it was like he could still feel the sand, grating underneath his hand. Shaking his head, he slowly got up, fixing his hair as he walked to the kitchen to turn on the water for tea. It was easier to do things automatically than dwell on the burning corners of his mind. The kettle blurred slightly and he shook his head, blaming the double vision on being tired. He went to the door to wait for Finn as the radio clicked on, echoing in his bedroom. He leaned with dead eyes against the doorframe, letting the dull chill settle in his chest.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

God, he was getting sick of that spiel.

This time, he greeted Finn with a little more caution. “Good morning, Finn. Is that note for me?”

Again, he was met with surprised brown eyes. “Whoa, hey. How did you know I would be out here, man?”

“It…it’s a long story,” he motioned for the man to come inside. “Did anyone follow you?”

He shrugged, “No, I don’t think so. What’s going on?”

“Sit down and have some tea, I’ve got some phone calls to make.”

Finn complied, looking at him with caution as Kylo dialled Poe and moved the chair by the door. He didn’t feel as robotic as he was acting, but it was like going through the motions. The crow hit the window and again he ignored it. Finn, however, moved to look at the dead bird on the balcony.

“Yeah, it’s Dameron. And it’s too early. What’d you want?”

“Hey, it’s Kylo,” He said, almost glad to hear the man’s voice, interrupting his thoughts. “Look, I have an important lead that I need to talk to you about. I’ve got something from the killer. He’s left a note under my door and there are so many things I found out yesterday.”

He heard the desk chair slide back and the other man swear. “Of all days, ugh, okay, wait, why are you calling me?”

He sighed into his phone. “Poe, it’s okay. I…I’m going to call it in, but we need to talk about your
nephew and some other things. Can you stick around for a bit? When you get here?”

There was a slight intake of breath on the other side. “Well, I guess there’s a reason that you’re a detective. Yeah, call it in and I’ll be there. Will your hot partner be there?”

He actually laughed this time. “Just get here.”

“All right.”

Then, he was able to dial the number that made his heart lift.

“Yeah, Niima?”

He smiled at the phone. “Hi.”

“Kylo? What’s wrong?”

“Rey, I know you’re out for a run, but can you come by my place? I need to talk to you. I have so many leads right now, Rey, and I need your help to sort them all out,” he enjoyed hearing her breathing on the other end of the phone.

“Of course! Tell me when I get there. Send me your address.”

He hung up and quickly texted her. He wouldn’t be able to fully relax until she got there and the door was locked. He turned to Finn and nodded at him. The other man still looked very, very confused.

“So, tea?”

His leg was bouncing as he was staring at the door, waiting for Rey, when Finn cleared his throat.

“Does this have anything to do with the dead kids?”

Kylo narrowed his eyes and nodded. “I think the man you met just now has something to do with whoever is killing all these kids.

“It wasn’t just now, it was around 5 a.m. About when the Post gets delivered,” Finn replied. “I thought it was super creepy, but I needed the $50.”

“For the neighbourhood kids, I know.”

“This is really freaking me out,” Finn said. “How do you know this?”

Rey appeared in the doorway, dropping her bag onto the chair. He smiled, brightly at her and she looked at him with a bit of trepidation. He went up and hugged her and she resisted a bit before lightly returning it and looked at him with serious surprise when he stepped back.

“What’s happening?” She noticed the other man at the table. “Finn, what are you doing here?”

“He’s here to help us solve the case. Come on, sit down. I made tea,” he motioned to her. He went behind her to lock the door and glare at it. Then he put the chair under the doorknob. Not today.

He turned and had two pairs of puzzled eyes on him.

“You can start explaining what’s going on here at anytime,” Finn said.
Kylo nodded and sat across from them. He slid the sugar across the table to Rey and she looked at it with slight wonder before taking it to stir into her cup. He forced himself to look away from the movement of her hand. He cleared his throat and they both looked at him. He tried to organize his thoughts so that they didn’t sound rehearsed.

“Something is happening to me today that I need you both to believe,” he started slowly, trying to tamp down on the happiness he felt at having her sit across from him. “To me, it’s the same day. I’m living through the same day, over and over again. I know it makes no sense, but this is the sixteenth start to this day I’ve had. I can’t explain it, but I know it has something to do with the killer and the murdered children. Rey, most of all, I need you to believe me. I’ve been an awful partner to you and I haven’t been fair when you’ve been trying so hard to get along with me. I’m so sorry for that. You’re talented and a good cop. If we can get through this day and solve the case, I’ll need you by my side.”

Rey bit the bottom of her lip and then frowned. “You know that this sounds insane, right?”

“Yes, I know,” he needed to convince her again. “But we’ve become better partners over these days and I’ve really come to depend on you and how you pay attention to the details that I’ve missed.”

“Let’s say…let’s say that I believe you, why do you need Finn?” Rey raised her eyebrow but looked at him with curiosity rather than suspicion.

“He’s seen one of the suspects,” he turned to the other man, repeating his words from a previous day. “When the team gets here, say that you saw the man leaving the note and came up to tell me, since it was out of the ordinary. Describe what you saw. I can’t let them take you with them because there are too many things that happen today…I thought Rey and I could handle it at first but now…it all goes to hell if I don’t have more help.”

Finn nodded and looked at Rey. “Do you believe him?”

Rey slowly studied Kylo. He met her eyes and hoped that the look he was giving her was genuine. He needed to focus and make this day right.

“What you just said sounds so unbelievable,” she took a slow breath and he prepared himself for any change. “But if you think what’s happening has already happened, then I need to believe you. Kylo, I know I didn't get to pick my partner, but I’m here now.”

“Thank you, Rey,” he smiled again, feeling a weight lifted off of his shoulders.

She turned to Finn. “He never smiles, and he also hugged me, so something has happened to him.”

Finn just shook his head. “Okay, Rey, if you believe him, then I can go along with it.”

“So what do we do?” She asked.

“The team will get here soon to get this clue,” he moved the paper over to her. “This will give us a chance to go off on our own and chase down the actual leads that I have. We need to talk to Dameron too, since he’s part of this and…and a good person.”

She looked at him again. “You’ve never said anything nice about anyone before either. Who are you and what have you done with my partner?”

He shrugged. “I’ve spent so many days with you and, well, you’ve made me a better person.”

She let her look linger as the sound of footsteps approached. They heard the knock on the door this
time and then he moved to let them in, carefully checking that it was actually the right people. Despite the eyebrow Mundi shot him, everything felt like it should. He let the team in and they began their investigation again. He still felt a lingering exhaustion, but he had to let this part play out and let things happen naturally. The same things were said. The same people were there. But he was going to let it play out because he had changed something, anything. The other two detectives questioned Finn briefly as Rey spoke to the captain. Dameron was again eyeing him and Kylo tried to place himself in the moment, forgetting the distant roar of the ocean in his ears. Wincing, he realize that he probably shouldn’t have hugged her when she came in the door but dammit he needed it.

“Captain, I think that Kylo and I have some leads to follow that we came up with last night. Also, Kylo seems shaken up by him coming to his house,” she shot him a look. “So I think that it would be best if we could follow this on our own, away from the team.”

Tekka regarded her carefully. “I was beginning to doubt that you two were good partners.”

Rey took another careful look at him over her shoulder and he gave a rough nod before she spoke again. “Well, we are. And I know him. Can you get another pair on this so we can follow our leads?”

The captain, again, eventually agreed. He always felt anxious before explaining the day, so why should today be any different? He wanted to start pacing around the room, ready to start the day, but had to wait for them to leave. Again, Dameron made an excuse to stay and everyone gradually left, taking the note and whatever scraps of things they thought were evidence.

“Okay, spill.” Dameron turned to look at him when the door shut.

Kylo quickly moved to lock it and turned to them. He needed to slow his thoughts down, but they all threatened to come spilling out.

“Let’s sit down, and I’ll explain. Poe Dameron, this is Finn. He met one of our suspects this morning,” as he sat down he thought again about what Finn had said. “Wait, did you say he was here around 5 a.m.?”

Finn nodded, “Yeah, we were unloading the Post. Look, Rey, the guy offered me $50 to drop off the note, and I needed the money. I…I didn’t mean to mess up your investigation.”

“It’s okay Finn,” Rey said, moving to sit next to Kylo. Finn and Dameron sat across from them and he tried not to move closer to her. “Or at least I think it’s okay.”

“Tell us what’s going on, Ren,” Dameron started again. “We haven’t got all day.”

He rolled his eyes. The only day they had was today. After scrubbing his face, he nodded and sat up. “I’ve lived through today before, like fifteen other times, I think. Every day starts the same, but we can do things to change it. I know that the killer must be in the loop too, since he seems to be able to guess where we will be and he tries to get us to repeat the same steps so he will be in control. We’ve been getting closer to him with every day and yesterday — or the previous today — I was able to make real progress regarding how the children are connected. But the first step is you getting your nephew away from your sister so she doesn’t sell him.”

He was beginning to get into the tone of the day and clamped down on his need for everything to hurry up. The last time he’d been here, she’d been fatally shot. He needed to focus on that.

“What the hell are you talking about?” Dameron shook his head. “How do you know about that?”
“I told you, I’ve lived through today before,” he sighed. “The killer uses your nephew, Elias, as a distraction. The real boy gets taken in the park by the zoo, a few hours from now. But the first day, the killer let us follow leads on your nephew. But if we send the rest of the team to your sister’s, then he’ll think that we’re following that again. What we need to do is figure out the rest of the day.”

Rey slowly nodded. “What’s happened on the other days?”

He turned to meet her eyes. He really couldn’t lie to her, but he didn’t want to overwhelm her again. But would it be fair not to tell her? “Rey, I don’t want you to be scared, but every day, at some time before midnight, you die. He kills you, somehow, and every time, I can’t stop it. I keep trying anything, even running from him, and it doesn’t work. If we try to hide, he gets angry and ends up causing more damage.”

She exhaled sharply and he saw Dameron and Finn sit up. “What do you mean I die?”

“He…kills you. He’s after you and me, and the children. We keep trying to save them and somehow, something goes wrong. I’ve messed things up so many times, Rey. I never want you to die alone, but sometimes you have and it hurts. A part of me dies every time that I lose you. You mean so much to me and I’ve had bad days. But when we work together, all of us, we can get closer to him. And eventually catch him.”

“So, wait, wait,” Dameron interrupted. “Why do you need us if you know what’s going to happen?”

He met his eyes. “I have a plan and we need to try to follow it. There are so many pieces of this puzzle and I need you all to trust me.”

Rey was the first to speak. “You’re my partner…I have to trust you. If you know what’s happening, you need to tell us what to do so we can stop him.”

He smirked at her and looked at the other two.

“Look, you knew about Elias and my sister,” Dameron said. “There’s no way you could have known about that.”

Finn just shrugged. “Hey, I owe you, I guess, for not sending me downtown.”

Kylo nodded and lightly tapped Rey on her arm. “Get your notebook so we can keep this straight.”

“Got it!” She grinned, moving to grab her bag. “What’s our first move?”

“First, Dameron keeps his nephew safe. Do what you had planned and don’t deviate from it. I still don’t think he’s figured out that we’re cooperating yet, but he might one of these days and that would change everything,” he wanted to explain more, but was worried that having too much information would end up changing Dameron’s normal routines. “There’s a note there for me — leave it so the team will find it. But I want you to take our phones with you. He’s following us with them. If you take them with you, and leave yours at the lab, then he’ll think we went for him directly. That will make him mad and hopefully he’ll make a mistake.”

“What do I do?” Finn asked. Kylo looked to him and nodded.

“There’s a homeless man that will be around this address,” he reached for a piece of paper and Rey was already ripping one off for him. He scribbled down the area. “Follow him. He’s going to dump a bomb vest in a trashcan and head downtown to the area around the cathedral. He’s going to get
another bomb there so when you get there, make an anonymous call and get him arrested and brought in for something. Vagrancy or claim he’s drunk, something. He’s got these burns on his face so he’ll be easy to send in.”

He turned to Rey again, swallowing his fear at meeting her eyes. “Rey, I need you to get your friend Rose to talk to the DA and mention that they were suspicious of a break-in at his office. I need to know how he reacts to someone other than me about this. I think that the killer is either threatening him, or he still might be a suspect. I need to untangle that part. If she can get the notebook and map that are in his desk, that would be great. A redheaded man might be around that area. If she can get him somehow taken in, that would be another step in the right direction.”

Rey was quickly writing down the steps and nodding. “And what do we do?”

“We’re going to go talk to some of the other parents,” he said. “I already talked to the mother of the Windu girl yesterday, as well as the parents of the boy that will be taken in the park. The kids were acting weird and they never mentioned that before. They drew these pictures and I need to see if the other children did the same.”

“And then what? We meet back at the station?” Dameron asked.

He shook his head. “We meet at Rey’s friend Maz’s place. But we can’t have our phones.”

“We’ve got cheap phones down at the stand,” Finn piped up. “We’ll use those.”

“Oh, and then what?” Dameron asked again. “That’s not that many steps.”

Kylo nodded. “There’s one more accomplice to the main murderer. He has these red and black tattoos. You were checking databases yesterday about him. If you could run those searches, we might be able to figure out who he is. I know that’s not a good description, but I think that those tattoos — red, black, all over his face — should narrow it down. But we need to focus on and control the redhead and the homeless man.”

Rey quickly made the final notes. “Kylo, you… we have to move soon, but you’ll tell me more about all of this while we’re on our way, right?”

“Yes, everything,” he answered, maybe too quickly. “Rey, I… yeah.”

He checked his watch. It was time to move. Rey made a quick call to Rose to explain the situation. The other three men sat there, pretending not to listen as she explained what she had to do. After a few minutes of arguing, she finally convinced her and looked at them in triumph.

“Someone will have to go and meet her,” she said.

“Finn can do that,” Kylo said. “Once you catch him outside the cathedral, or before, go to Rose at the courthouse. Wait, Rey, call her back and say that it will be in the afternoon that someone will meet up with her.”

Rey nodded and quickly redialed the number. The last part of the conversation was about how she couldn’t get in touch with her again at another number that she’d send her later, but to trust a guy named Finn who would show up and tell her what to do next.

After a few parting words, Finn and Dameron left, and Rey quickly grabbed her bag to change. Before she could move away, he quietly apologized for her not being able to shower and she just lifted her shoulders slightly.
“It’s…it’s okay,” she smiled at him lightly. She still looked at him with soft eyes. “Am I really doing this to you? Making you kinder?”

“Yes, yes you are.”

She quirked her head and then quietly left the room to change in his bedroom. That was a change. She returned and her hair was down instead of in a ponytail. Another change. She looked at him as he quickly moved by her to switch his shirt as she lingered in the doorway.

“Kylo, why did you hug me this morning?” She eyed him as he stood shirtless across the small distance.

He was buttoning up his shirt as he brushed by her. “You’ve probably already figured it out.”

He reached out and took one of her hands and gently squeezed it.

She took a slow breath and gently responded. “We…I still don’t understand what you are saying, but maybe on one of your other todays, we slept together, probably. This…the way you’re acting. You’re more comfortable around me and you keep looking at me with sad eyes, and you’ve already said that you need me.”

He studied her mouth before meeting her eyes. “We’re…sort of dating.”

She groaned and looked at the ceiling. When her eyes snapped back to his, she seemed to have accepted what he was saying.

“So the only way I can get a boyfriend is that I don’t remember him the next morning and we work together, that’s so typically me that I want to scream,” her tone was serious but he could see the smile in her eyes.

“Look, Rey, it’s been hard to not start caring about you. Seeing you die, always in horrible ways, has been something that I have to deal with every time that I close my eyes,” he shook his head. “But I’m so grateful that I’ve had the chance to get to know you and really regret the time that I wasted being rude to you before this all started. I just know that every morning, when I wake up here, the best part of my day is hearing your voice for the first time again.”

“And I never remember?”

“Never,” he sighed, reaching up to cup her face. “And every day, I have to get you to believe me and it all starts over again.”

She shifted her weight from side to side, not pulling away.

“I…I’m attracted to you, it’s hard not to be,” she replied, stepping closer. “But to me, I still remember who you were yesterday. How you yelled at me and were disrespectful. It’s hard to see you right now, looking at me and talking to me like I’m a person.”

“I can’t change who I was yesterday, but I’m here today, Rey,” he bent down to gently kiss her. To his surprise, she didn’t pull away. “I’ve tried to push you away, I’ve tried to ignore our responsibilities, and today I almost didn’t tell you that you might die today. But I just can’t keep this from you. You’re my partner.”

“This is all going over my head,” she looked down, almost embarrassed. “But no one has ever looked at me the way that you’re doing right now. You’re just…different. And I like it.”
“Good,” he pulled her into a loose hug when there was a knock at the door. He tensed until he heard a familiar voice call.

“Hey, it’s Finn!”

He quickly opened the door to get their phones. There were no surprises this time but he was still tense whenever he opened the door. Their other phones were safely with Poe and he would follow the route that he had in mind. They said goodbye to Finn and he grabbed the most recent files he had brought home as they headed out the door.

“Which family do we go to first? The Gallias or the or the Piells?” She asked, studying the files as they sat in their cab.

“I think the Piells,” he said. “I remember talking to them and not really thinking through the fact that there might be something happening with the children before they were taken.”

She gave the driver the address and nodded. “Yeah, as I recall you were quite snappy with her.”

He sighed. “They probably won’t be happy to see me then.”

“Maybe they’ll like the new you?”

“Do you…like the new me?”

She gently reached for his hand. “Kylo, I’m fine. This case has been weighing on me for weeks and it’s now been weighing on you for twice as long. I…I feel better knowing that I have someone who cares about me. I feel a little less alone.”

He nodded. “Great. Rey, I…I’ll tell you everything when we’re done here, okay? The case comes first right now.”

“Yes, cops first.” She nodded.

They reached the house of the Piells. He was the boy taken at the movie theatre. Kylo remembered how angry he had been at the mother and how he had reacted and winced at his lack of empathy.

It was still relatively early. Poe should have his nephew and Finn should be waiting to find the homeless man at the first meeting point. He kept checking the burner phone, waiting for any word from them. They walked up the steps of the simple home and she rang the bell. He tried to look patient and felt easier to feel that way with her beside him again.

A tired-looking woman answered the door. She was older, but resembled the mother he remembered from questioning earlier. She looked at them, recognising them as police.

“Yes, hello?”

“Hello, ma’am, we’re Detective Niima and Ren, we’ve been working on Evan’s case. We have some follow-up questions and we really hope you can help us out with them,” Rey softly said. “Can we come in?”

The woman sighed and nodded. “Yes, come in. My daughter is in his room.”

“I’m so sorry about your grandson,” Kylo said, softly. “We’re getting closer to finding the man who did this.”

She looked at him coldly for a second then led them inside. “It’s only been a week and we still
can’t believe he’s gone. The funeral was yesterday, so she’s still not doing well.”

They came inside the simple house and he quickly swept the space. She didn’t know that they’d been there to see him laid to rest and at this point, he only held a ghost memory of shapes behind headstones. There were vases of flowers, cards, and teddy bears everywhere. It was always hard to remember that it was still today for everyone else. In his head, he was so far removed from what had happened the day before. The last thing he remembered was being exhausted and falling asleep. He was so focused on finding a tomorrow that he forgot that yesterday was still closer for everyone else.

“I’m sorry we came at a bad time,” Rey said, her voice still gentle. “Ask her if she can talk to us? If she’s up to it?”

The woman nodded and moved to another part of the house. When she returned, she had a sullen-looking younger woman by the arm. He slowly realised that she must have only been a few years older than Rey, about his age. Why was he so harsh on this woman?

“How are you?” She managed a small greeting. “Would you like some coffee?”

She sat down at the kitchen island and her mother turned to turn on the pot. “Dar, you should eat something.”

Dar looked at them and then back to her mother. “I…I’ll have some toast.”

Her mother gave her a tight smile, then turned to retrieve the bread from the fridge and went about fixing her daughter a plate. Rey carefully sat across from the woman and Kylo joined them.

“How are you?” she asked, choosing his words with care. “I know it was a stressful time and I really didn’t mean to cause more harm to an already unimaginable situation.”

“Just call me Dar,” she looked down at the coffee cups that her mother had spread out between them. Her cup had a small chip in the enamel; she traced the white fleck, set out from the dark mug. “I don’t think I’ll be a Mrs for much longer.”

Her mother sighed. “He…Evan’s dad took it hard. He blamed her for losing him and he left after the funeral and hasn’t been back.”

“But I appreciate your apology, Detective Ren.” Dar met his eyes.

He returned the look and felt the emotions of the previous day wash over him. “I also just lost someone. Someone I love very much. I don’t want to diminish what you’re feeling, but I know the hole you fall into when you lose someone…that’s your world. I’m so sorry I couldn’t see the pain that you felt earlier.”

Rey didn’t say anything and her face was still serious, but he felt her hand settle on his leg and slightly squeeze. He kept his eyes on Dar and her reaction.

Dar smiled slightly and shook her head. “I…you were just trying to do your job. But I’m also sorry for your loss. Losing Evan…I feel so broken and alone. And with Rob leaving, I don’t know how I can wake up tomorrow and try to move forward.”

Her mother put her arm around her. “We’ll get through it, sweetie. We have to.”

Rey sipped at her coffee, still keeping her hand resting on his thigh. It kept him grounded in the
“Did you have some questions about Evan?”

“Yes, we’ve got some new information from some of the other parents,” Rey started. “I know this is hard, but I want you to think back on the last day that you were with Evan. Think about the tastes and the smells. What you ate for breakfast, start there. Was there anything different about him that day?”

Dar closed her eyes, slipping easily into a happy memory. “We were worried about the other children being taken, but we didn’t want to make him nervous. He had been home from school for a few days because he said his tummy hurt. He wanted chicken noodle soup for breakfast and then refused to eat it. He stared at me and looked so tired. There were bags under his eyes...how can a kid look like that?”

Kylo had pulled out his notepad and was making careful notes that he knew would be useless in the next loop, but would work for today.

Rey nodded. “He wasn’t normally sick?”

She shook her head. “He would get a flu bug occasionally but he wasn’t really sick. I thought he was faking it and Rob was even more annoyed. He was swamped at work and only lightly hugged him goodbye.”

Tears started to form in her eyes as she thought about the final day with her son. Rey’s hand tightened on his leg.

“How did Evan react to that?” He asked softly.

Dar frowned and bit her lip. “It was almost like he saw it coming. He said goodbye to his daddy and then went to his room. I wanted to make him feel better and do something normal, so we went to a matinee. I just...I just wanted him to be himself again. I never thought that he’d…he’d be gone.”

She sobbed gently and rested her head against the counter. Kylo stopped taking notes and exchanged a quick glance with Rey. She had questions in her eyes that would have to be answered later.

Dar’s mother was softly rubbing her back. “Is there anything else I can answer for you? I’m really tired.”

Kylo nodded. “Did he draw anything? In the last few days?”

Dar lifted her head and shook it. “No, he doesn’t draw.”

_Dammit_, Kylo thought, his connection feeling like it was slipping away.

“But he makes dolls,” she moved off of her chair. “He loved making felt dolls with me. He…” she paused. “He was almost mad at me when I tried to change the ones that he wanted to make the morning before...well. The morning before my life was taken from me.”

She shuffled off to the bedroom and the three remaining adults awkwardly sipped at their coffee cups.

She returned, holding three oddly shaped felt dolls. An adult hand carefully sewed the seams but
the hot-glued on felt pieces were placed with childhood innocence.

He stared at them and Rey studied his features. One had a bright orange strip glued to his head, the other had poorly cut strips of red and black. And the final one had a puff of cotton glued to his head. There were black and grey strips glued to all of them.

“We didn’t have enough black,” she smiled lightly. “He is still...he was mad about that. I told him we’d buy more tomorrow...but that wasn’t good enough.”

Kylo felt the hairs on his arms stand up. This was the third one. Why couldn’t they see this before? Why didn’t they see this before? They were so focused on what connected the kids superficially rather than emotionally. They didn’t dig into their personalities. They were bad cops.

Rey gently touched the dolls. “Did he...tell you their names?”

She shook her head. “He just said he was having bad dreams that made his tummy hurt. I don’t know why he wanted to make them. He normally just makes football players.”

Kylo jotted down a few more notes. He wanted to rush out of there and to the next parents, but something in the woman’s eyes made him remember the kindness that was shown to him on the previous days. There was so much to do today, but this woman needed comfort.

“Dar, this helps us. This is...you have no idea how much this has helped us,” he studied the dolls again, focusing on the white hair of the unknown figure that he needed to find. “I will never be able to bring him back, but if we can save another child with this information, then...then it still won’t bring him back. But that little boy will carry Evan with him, wherever he goes. Evan never got a tomorrow, but for the next child, his tomorrow will be with him.”

She looked at him, tears brimming in her eyes. “I still just want him.”

“I know,” he wanted to cry with her but stilled his face. “But we’ll get this monster and tomorrow, it might be easier to breathe again. And later, it might be easier to walk again. But Evan, and this other boy, will always walk with you. I won’t forget him, Dar. He’ll always be with us.”

“But...you didn’t know him.”

“With this,” he picked up the white-haired figure. “In a way I do. Just believe me.”

He felt a tear slip down his face as he looked at her and she took a deep breath.

“I...Detective Ren, I do.”

Rey’s voice was almost shaky as she stepped forward. “I’m sorry we had to put you through that, Dar.”

She looked from Kylo to his partner. “Whoever he lost, he’s a different person now. Detective Niima, please find the man that hurt my boy. So I can sleep again.”

She nodded and Dar slumped slightly.

“Mom, I need to go to bed. Thank them for me,” she turned and left without her mother’s support. From the other room, they heard soft sobs.

Her mother eventually gathered up their cups to take them to the sink.

“Just get him,” she shook her head, starting to wash the coffee mugs with determination. “This will
never end for her, but at least make it end for the rest of the city.”

Kylo and Rey stood in unison. “We’re…we didn’t mean for…”

She shook her head. “Those words, detective, they came from somewhere real. Keep your promise.”

They were at the door when they heard her turn to speak again.

“Tears can only last for so long, I know. I buried my husband at 35. Eventually, those tears and that pain can take only three ways: you become haunted and bitter, you remember and enjoy the happy times and move on, or you just shut off the world,” the words, like the bullets from before, hit him hard. “My daughter needs a happy ending. Help her. I haven’t been to work at the hospital since all of this happened and she needs some hope. Give her that.”

They could only nod and leave the tension of the situation, basically fleeing the house.

On the walk down the steps, she firmly took his hand. He couldn’t control his breathing and felt like he was going to break down at any second.

“Kylo, Kylo, it’s okay,” she softly said as they walked to the corner to call a cab. “I’m still here. You haven’t lost me yet.”

He shook his head, starting to lose it. His heart, his breathing, his mind, everything was coming into a maelstrom that threatened to swallow him whole. He couldn’t see her or the street anymore. It washed together in a swirl of yesterdays and todays yet to come. “It’s not fair, Rey. It’s not fair that I can only save you and the Jinn boy. The other children, they should have had more days. Why am I the one that can’t save them? Why couldn’t I have all of those days over and over again so I could save them all? I thought I could handle this, but I just wake up and feel empty and…gone. Losing you, losing them. I’m…I’m not strong enough.”

She pulled him into a tight and warm hug, on the street corner of a New York suburb on a gradually warming September morning.

“You can’t change the past,” she whispered. “But we can change tomorrow.”

He held her close, not wanting to leave the moment.

She slowly and lightly pushed him away. “Did you mean what you said?”

“That I love you? Yes,” he said. “I…Rey, I know you don’t think it’s possible, but I know you now. I know about your past, and I know who you are now. You’re smart, think quickly and are loyal. You always trust me when I go on that insane explanation. I try so hard to keep from losing you and it just happens. I refuse to let the day end with you dying.”

She licked her lips. “What happens if that’s the only way to save the children?”

His legs felt weak and he pulled her closer again. “Don’t say that. Please don’t say that.”

She shook her head against his chest. “I’m sorry. I won’t…I won’t bring it up again.”

He slowly let her go and she called a cab. Standing in the middle of suburbia, he took slow and even breaths. He had hoped that the break would centre him and in a way it did. But his focus was still more on her than the case. Then he remembered the pain in the eyes of the mothers that he had spoken to. This went beyond them. They had a job to do.
In that moment, he silently decided that if he woke up and it was tomorrow, and she was gone, he would end it all. He may be a better person, but he couldn’t go anywhere without following her.

Creating the new rule almost made him feel lighter. He wanted her to live, but if she didn’t, he would just join the blackness.

He looked at her as the cab pulled up. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m okay,” she smiled lightly. “So, the Gallias? Do we have time?”

He checked his watch and frowned. It was almost time for the boy to be heading over to the park.

“Rey, do we let him be taken? He doesn’t kill them until the next morning?”

She frowned. “It will be hard on the parents but, like you said, he’s expecting us to follow Dameron’s nephew. I don’t like it, but…but we let it happen today. If it all happens again, maybe you can change my mind.”

He nodded, thankful for her quick thinking. “So, the Gallias.”

The taxi ride was long and Rey stretched out on the backseat to rest her head on his lap. He absently stroked her hair. He had brought her down with him and she shouldn’t have to have this burden.

“Hey,” he said after a half an hour. They still had at least fifteen minutes to go before they reached their apartment. “Don’t…don’t be afraid.”

She sat up to look at him. “I’m not. I’m more…afraid for you. Kylo, why do you care about me? I’m a nobody.”

He kissed her lightly, his lips hardly brushing hers. It was chaste. It was fitting. “You’ll never know how much you mean to me. And don’t worry. I’m…I’m thinking about things and how…how to move on in case this day has to end in…a bad way.”

Their phones buzzed, bringing them back into the case. Finn had called in the homeless man and he’d been arrested. Yes. One down. Dameron texted next. He had some details about the tattooed man, but they weren’t much. He would have to call to explain the rest. The afternoon deadline loomed, but he hoped that the conversation at the Gallias would go quicker once they got there.

When they exited the cab, he gave Mundi’s police account number rather than his own. He was trying to clean up these loose ends. And also wanted to stick it it the older man.

The Gallias were almost the opposite of the simple home of the Piells. The apartment building glistened in the late morning light as they walked up to the doorman.

“Detectives Niima and Ren, we need to speak to Mr and Mrs Gallia?” Rey started.

The doorman eyed their badges. “Are they expecting you?”

“No, but we have some follow-up questions about their daughter.” Rey said firmly.

The doorman met Kylo’s eyes and he was nearly done with the lack of respect Rey got from other people. He managed a low nod, not saying anything.

“Sure, he’s home. I’ll let them know you are here and you can go up.”
The doorman let them into the small foyer and he went to make a call on a golden phone. Kylo was instantly irritated by the change in setting.

“Yeah, you can go up. Floor 25. Apartment 3.”

“Thank you!” Rey called as they moved to the elevator.

Kylo was still trying to calm down when she gently put her hands on his hips. “Stop worrying.”

“I’m…I’m more annoyed at all of this,” he waved his hand. “Evan’s mother was easy to talk to. Who knows how these people will be.”

She kissed him on the cheek. “It was the M&Ms that interviewed them, right?”

He nodded. “And their reports are unreadable.”

She smirked in agreement. “Kylo, look at me.”

He slowly met her gaze.

“Be here. With me.”

Looking into her brown eyes, he found his centre again. “Thank you.”

The elevator plinged. “Just focus on the case, okay?”

“Okay.”

They rang the door chime and he tried to settle into his role. A brown-skinned man dressed in black opened the door and greeted them. His smile was tight as he greeted them.

“Hello, Mr Gallia? We’re here to ask some follow-up questions about your daughter, Aksha? I’m detective Niima and this is my partner, detective Ren,” Rey spoke sternly, yet had the hint of softness. “We’re so sorry for your loss.”

The man sighed and his fake smile faltered. “Yes, I…Bob said that you would be coming up. Come in. My wife is at work and I’m at home with the baby.”

The apartment was huge and immaculate. The walls were white and fine art decorated the space. Noticing that he wasn’t wearing shoes, they slipped off theirs and followed him into the kitchen.

“Can I make you tea?” He asked. “I know it’s almost lunch, but…but we haven’t been ourselves since Asha left us.”

Kylo nodded. “We’d appreciate something to drink, sir.”

The dignified man turned and shook his head at him. “Please, detective, call me Avik. I don’t think we’ve spoken before. There were other men here when Asha was taken.”

Rey nodded. “Yes, we’re a part of a team, but now we have information that we hope will lead us to the man who hurt your daughter.”

The man glanced at Rey and nodded, before turning back to the stove. “What have you found out about my daughter?”

Kylo felt himself stiffen at the tone. There would be none of the emotions shared before with this
man, he realised.

“Avik, we have some questions about how she was acting before she was abducted,“ he said firmly. “Were you with her before she…”

“Before she died? Oh yes,” he set a refined teakettle on the burner. “I’ve taken time off work to make sure I always have time for my children.”

Rey had been scanning the apartment before coming to stand beside him. “Can you tell us about the day she was taken? I know you already told the others, but it would help to hear it again.”

The man sighed. “I don’t know where to begin. Please, go into the sitting room. I will collect my thoughts and join you with tea.”

He pointed them to a room down the hall and they followed the ornate decorations on the wall to the room. Kylo could feel Rey tense at the style of the apartment.

“He chooses children from all groups, why?” She asked again.

“We need to get through to him,“ he whispered as they sat beside one another on a couch that looked more for show than use. “We might need to talk to the wife after.”

The man eventually joined them, a teapot in his hand and a tray of cups in the other. “Our girl has the day off, I apologise.”

“It’s fine, sir, we’re more interested in your daughter,” he said, keeping close to Rey and picking up his poured mug of tea.

“What do you want to know?”

“Was she…in anyway different before she was taken?” He asked.

The man blinked, thinking back. “I…I was to be honest distracted. I’m trying to go back to work soon. There was a new course I was taking online to keep my license current. And it’s been so much with her and the baby…”

“What do you remember?” Rey asked, softly. “Start with the tastes and smells.”

He blinked lightly at her. “Well…we were making pancakes. I hated it. It’s too…American. We moved here just after she was born and it always bothered me when she would come home, filled with ideas about this country.”

“Yes, the pancakes, how did they smell?”

He heard her words and seemed to think about them. “Burnt. She wanted them…too quickly. She was pushing me to finish them…I don’t know why this is important.”

“It’s good, sir.” Kylo added. “What else happened that day?”

He sighed. “The baby was crying and the nanny had the day off, and my wife was working. I…she was mad at me. My mother has been calling all of the time. She doesn’t like that we live in the city and that I’m not working. Asha, she didn’t want to talk to nana again.”

Kylo nodded. “Where do you and your wife work?”

Avik sipped his tea. “I’m a doctor, mostly in private practice. She’s a lawyer.”
Again, the connection to healthcare, Kylo almost grinned at finding the link. He didn’t mention his employment during the first interviews, basically saying he was a stay-at-home dad. That was why they missed it before. If the other woman just said she was a student, they wouldn’t have caught it earlier either. He nodded at Rey and added the note to the growing list of information.

“Did she draw or make anything out of the ordinary in the days before the abduction?” Rey asked.

He frowned at the question. “We…I…haven’t really checked. Again, the baby was fussing.”

Kylo was beginning to wonder if there really was a baby when a tiny voice started crying from somewhere distant in the apartment. “Excuse me. I will check Asha’s room while I tend to Adam.”

“Do all of their names start with A?” He mused when the father left the room.

“Don’t joke,” she said, swatting at him. “So he’s also connected to healthcare. That’s what…the third one?”

“Fourth. Windu works at the hospital where you died.”

She frowned at him. “You’re still living that day, aren’t you?”

He reached for his tea again. “It’s…always fresh the next today. It’s like you keep asking them; the smells, the sounds, you…”

She reached for his hand again. “That wasn’t me today. Was I…was it painful?”

He sighed. “I’m sorry, but it looked…it looked bad. The last time it was this bad, we died in a car accident.”

“You can die too? How does that work?”

They were interrupted by the return of Avik, holding a baby in a blue bundle and a few papers in the other. Kylo sat up straighter as he handed them the drawings.

“I hadn’t noticed these before, I’m sorry,” he sat down, holding his son. “They were under her pillow. We…we haven’t touched her side of their room.”

Kylo studied the pictures. She’d drawn a circle, neatly in the middle of the page. She had carefully sketched four faces, one of them hers. Again, the redheaded man, the tattooed man, and a silver-haired older figure were on the page.

“She’s very good at drawing,” Avik said. “She takes classes. She is…wanted to be an artist. But there’s no money in that.”

The older man had a long face and slightly curly hair in this drawing. It was very detailed and he could almost match it if they saw his face in person.

“Thank you, sir, these help us very much,” Rey said, also looking at the paper.

The other drawing was another night scene. It looked like a field of some kind, maybe a park. It was just scenery and no figures. It was basically useless.

Kylo nodded to Rey. “Thank you for your time, sir. We have other parents to interview. Again, we’re sorry for your loss.”

The baby squirmed in his arms. “I’m sorry I can’t see you out, but I appreciate your time.”
Walking out of the apartment, Kylo replayed the discussions he’d had with the four parents. Again, he was angry at not seeing the connections before.

“Text Poe and Finn, tell them we’re on our way to Maz’s.” He said, flagging down a taxi.

He was again lost in thought as they drove through the city. They still had a long list of parents to talk to. There would have to be more days. Rey was making more notes and frowning. She’d texted the others and was waiting for a reply.

“We need to go back to the office after,” she sighed. “We have all the addresses there for the others there.”

He shook his head in agreement. “We should probably tell the others about the connections. I still don’t like the associations with the DA’s office and the fact that he has trackers in our phones. There’s something there that makes me unwilling to trust anyone other than Poe and Finn.”

“And Rose.”

“Her too.”

The reached the bar and he again scanned the street for the truck. If he wasn’t able to track their phones, he was going to find them and retaliate at some point. It was later than he expected to be back.

“We got them both!” Dameron exclaimed, jumping from the booth that the three others were sitting. “And she got the notebook. What did you get from the parents?”

They sat down and he slid them both cups of beer and poured everyone another round from a mostly full pitcher.

“It’s a bar,” Dameron said. “And it’s been a hell of a morning.”

“Yeah, try talking to mourning parents two days in a row,” he shook his head, accepting the glass. Rey followed his lead, but sipped very slowly. It was hard for her not to be on duty, he observed.

“So they both got taken in? What did you say?”

Rose pulled out the notepad and map from under the table. “The redhead was easy. He was there without proper identification. He’s at your station, throwing a fit, I bet.”

“What about the homeless man?”

Finn looked a little guilty. “I um…sort of panicked at the first spot. I mean, he had a bomb and he was just throwing it away. I called and they got him there.”

“He didn’t take anything? Poison?” Kylo asked.

“No, no, they got him and the bomb.”

“So the Jinn boy must be safe,” Rey said. “We should go talk to them.”

He sighed, deeply and nodded. “What about the tattooed man?”

Dameron grinned, “Oh yeah, him. Yeah, I was able to do a search in the five minutes I was at work. The captain is pissed, by the way, and the DA was in and out of the office. What are we going to do about him?”
Kylo checked his watch. “He’s already left mass by now. If he’s back at the office, we need to figure out how he’s connected to all of this too. Who is the tattooed man, Poe?”

“Ulrik Maul,” he unfolded a sheet of paper from his pocket. “Some hit man from Germany. I think like, old school East Germany. I had to go through InterPol to find him. He’s basically a ghost. No address and no motivations other than he likes to hurt people for money. He was in South America before this, they think.”

“We have to find out where he’s staying and get to him to. If we can control the people he’s got working for him, he’ll have to show his face,” Kylo finished his beer and shook his head, noticing the still slightly confused, but also tired faces. “But we should probably eat and discuss what’s going on here. The children have more connections than we saw before. They’ve seen all of our suspects.”

Rey smiled lightly at him as he let her out of the booth to talk to Maz and place an order for whatever they served at the dingy bar. Why would she hang out here?

“Detective Ren, there was something else at his office,” Rose said softly. Kylo turned away from watching Rey back to her.

“What else?”

“There was this man looking for him, just before I left,” she shook her head. “I didn’t recognise him, but was this tall old guy. He looked…really really mad.”

Kylo’s eyes widened. “Rose, that could be him.”

She looked at Finn and Dameron and frowned. “I…should I have stopped him? He just took off when he found out the DA wasn’t there.”

“No, Rose,” he said. “You did your part. After we’re done here, we’ll all go back to work and we’ll see if he shows his face again.”

When Rey returned, she saw Rose’s expression. “What’s wrong?”

“She may have seen our killer,” Finn answered. “How did you not know he’d show up?”

Kylo shook his head. “This is the first time we’ve tried to stop all of the accomplices. If he’s out, looking for the DA, then we need to figure out why.”

“And if the other parents have some connection to healthcare. And why,” Rey added. “There’s still so much to figure out.”

“We’ll get to him,” Kylo said, taking her hand. “We’ll get to him and you won’t die.”

They were interrupted by a happily humming Maz with a tray of hamburgers. They ate in relative silence, and Kylo let himself slip back into previous days: being with her on the beach, being with her on the roof, being with her in the apartment upstairs. He had followed them with their phones, his credit card, and traffic cameras. Taking taxis helped lose him. Who was this man and why did he seem to have such power?

“I’m wondering,” Dameron spoke up. “When does the loop start? If he’s figured out you’re working with Finn, why not just shoot him on the street?”

Kylo thought about the question. In the back of his mind, that part had bothered him the entire day.
“I think that the loop starts when I wake up. Everything that’s set in motion — killing the girl, giving the note to Finn, talking to the homeless man about where we will be — he can’t change that. It’s the only thing that...makes some sense.”

“None of this makes sense but I guess in all of this, that part is probably the answer,” Finn said with a shrug. “He sets it all up and then bam, he can’t undo it. So he spends the rest of the day guessing.”

“He’s going to be pissed,” Dameron added.

“I want...I want you all to remember that whatever happens, we...we’re going to try the next day. Other people are going to die and it’s going to hurt. We have to keep working together,” he said, seriously. He looked at Rey and she met his eyes with tired acceptance. “We’ll get ahead of him soon. Now, let’s get back to work.”

They split up. Finn went back to the paper stand, instructed to watch for anyone lurking around his building. Rose went back to the courthouse to check the cameras for the man and get back to them. She was also supposed to keep an eye on the DA. Dameron rode with Kylo and Rey back to the station to keep working on the case. They would try to keep a low profile before heading out to the Jinn residence. They had to talk to the boy and see what he knew. Then, if they weren’t shot or stabbed, they would tackle another family.

“Where have you two been?” Mundi demanded when they walked up to their desks to grab the next two case files.

“We’re doing our jobs, what are you doing?” Kylo nearly snapped at the other man, but then corrected his tone. “Look, we’re...we’ve got a lead.”

Rey gave him a careful look and nodded. Time to broaden their team.

Mundi came over to their desk and looked at them firmly.

“What have you got?”

“We’re thinking that the killer might be after the DA. One of the security guards saw a strange man that was demanding to see him,” Rey started. “She’s going over the tapes right now.”

“And the two men that were brought in — the redhead from the courthouse and the homeless man with the bomb — are his accomplices,” Kylo said, flipping through his notebook. “We’re going to go talk to a boy that might have seen him as well.”

“What about the other kid, Elias? We’ve been chasing that all morning,” Mundi sounded annoyed at the lack of communication from the two detectives.

He shook his head. “That...he doesn’t have him. Have there been any other kids taken?”

Mundi rolled his eyes. “There’ve been spoof calls all day. Every time we chase them down, the kid is fine.”

“Anything else happen? Bomb threats?”

Mundi looked slightly shocked and shook his head. “Nothing like that. So should we lean on the two perps?”

He nodded. “Yes, try to figure out who they’re working for. Don’t let them leave the station.”
“Yes, sir,” Mundi agreed. “Anything specific we should ask them?”

“Ask about a tall grey-haired man, and how they are following us,” he replied. “Let’s go, Rey.”

So, there was another member of the team. Kylo mused telling the rest of them as they headed out to the Jinn house. Memories of talking to them floated up through his memory: the kindness of Kristina, bleeding into Poe’s shirt, Rey dead at the hospital.

“We’re doing good, right?” Rey asked. “This is the right step?”

He nodded. “I’m still worried about how he’ll react. And we need to find that tattooed man.”

She sighed. “There’s too much to do today.”

“But we’re getting ahead of him. And I’m worried what he’s going to do,” Kylo reached for her hand again. “I’ll do anything to save you.”

“And them.”

“And them.”

The Jinns were home when they arrived. Letting them inside, they were surprised when they brought up their trip to the zoo.

“I’m sorry to taint your memory,” Kylo said. “I’m sure it was a beautiful day.”

Kristina shook her head. “No, you didn’t. What do you think our son knows?”

Rey was looking around the house and re-joined the three in the kitchen. “We’ll find out when we talk to him.”

Mats nodded. “He’s in his room.”

They walked up the stairs that were familiar to Kylo, but not Rey. Quirin was reading a book, resting on his bed. He was happily humming to himself when Rey knocked on the door.

“Hello Quirin, I’m Detective Niima and this is Detective Ren. Can we talk to you? About the park?” She moved to sit on the bed beside the boy.

“Yeah, sure, it was a fun day,” he sat up, looking at the two of them. “So you’re cops? And you have guns?”

“Yes, yes we do,” Kylo sat on the other side of the boy. “Quirin, is something strange happening to you today?”

The boy shrugged. “I’ve had a been really sleepy and barfing all the time. It’s gross.”

“Yeah, I don’t like being sick either,” Rey smiled. “Have you seen anyone you don’t know today?”

He shrugged. “I think I remember, but then I don’t remember.”

“What do you mean?” Rey asked.

Kylo thought about what the boy was saying. “Quirin, have you…have you met us before? At the park?”
Quirin looked confused and then looked at Rey. “You mean when mom and dad took me before?”

“Before when, Quirin?”

“On one of the other todays.”

Kylo eyes snapped to Rey’s and she had to still her reaction. “It’s the same day for you?”

“Yeah, it’s like…it’s like I’m dreaming all the time. I get mad that mom and dad keep doing the same stuff. It’s super boring,” he rolled his eyes.

“What…what’s happened on the other days?” Kylo asked carefully.

“The man takes me in the park and then we go away. The strange man puts me in a car and then we drive far far away. He keeps asking me about somebody named Ben and gets mad that I don’t know him,” he frowned. “Then he takes me by the neck and it hurts but then I go to sleep and it’s today again. But sometimes my neck hurts and there are blue marks.”

Kylo took a shaky breath. “Quirin, this is…this will help us so much. Thank you. Can you do us a favour and not go anywhere else today? Stay inside and watch TV, maybe?”

The boy groaned. “It’s always the same shows. But okay. If you say so.”

Rey lightly hugged the boy and they left his room intending on talking to his parents downstairs, planning on instructing them to keep Quirin inside.

They were surprised to find the tattooed man coming up the stairs.

“How are you here?” He hissed. “You’re not supposed to be here!”

They both pulled out their guns, taking equal stances beside one another.

Kylo gritted his teeth. “This ends today.”

“No. He says not until he gets what he wants,” he opened his jacket and Kylo saw the bomb.

He grabbed Rey’s hand and let the explosion take them. There was nowhere to go except the next loop.
Chapter Summary

Rey and Kylo go undercover to find out what Ben Kenobi knows. Read the tags for warnings!

Day 17

Kylo shivered, jolted, and woke up. Memories of the blast flashed through his mind; fire, warmth, a burst of hurt in his lungs. He coughed, hard, and the tips of his fingers tingled, like the memory of being burnt. He looked at his hands and was almost sure his arm hair had been singed slightly. Shaking his head at the ghost memory, he hoped that Rey didn’t feel any pain. He looked at the clock. 5.52. Okay, so another early start. Time to rebuild the team and start over. They had so much more to work on now that he needed to get to all of them as soon as possible. Now, he had the heads up that the suspect would be at the courthouse.

He still wished that they had had more time. How were they going to find the tattooed man, Maul? He groaned at that part; it was almost more frustrating than the realization that the boy was in the loop too.

His head hurt, but he had to keep going.

He actually turned off the radio today before going to the door to greet Finn. He knew what day it was by his watch and phone. He didn’t need to know about the weather and how they were failing at the case.

“Good morning,” he said, opening the door. “How’s it going?”

Finn’s wide eyes and shocked expression were a good way to get him back into the loop. He couldn’t let this start to feel routine. There would always be something new to tackle and he had to let that stop getting to him. He rarely felt proud of himself for holding it together, because he had never really thought about it before. There had been stressful cases in the past, but those all had a more clear endpoint. This one had an end that he truly despised.

“How did you know I would be out here, man?” Finn stammered, looking at him wildly.

Another idea crossed his mind. “Can you give me the note then head downstairs? I need you to bring me four of the phones that you sell at the stand. I’ll pay you back. Bring them to me and we’ll talk to Rey when she gets here. Do it, and I won’t have you arrested for helping a child killer.”

“What?” He hated using the threat, but he needed an instant reaction. “How did you know I know Rey? How did you know he was the guy taking all those kids?”

“You helped her when she fell near here a while ago,” he shrugged. “You are friends and talk about the kids in your neighbourhood. Finn, just believe me.”
“This is freaking me out? Why did that guy give me $50 to drop the note and run?” Finn asked, confused. "Is this some trick, or something?"

“Look, I need you to get the phones and trust me, okay? Watch out for anyone strange out there,” he answered with seriousness. “He might be back.”

Slowly, Finn nodded. “All right. For Rey. And the kids.”

Kylo turned and called the lab. Next step, Dameron. The crow hit the window in the middle of their conversation. He thought he was seeing double; was there a second one lying out there? He was slowly drawn back into his conversation with Dameron, despite a dull ringing in his ears.

“How do you know about my nephew? You never talk to me unless it’s to yell,” Dameron said.

Kylo sighed. “Look, something’s happening today and I really need your help. I’m going to call in the note and then when you get here, stick around. I’ll explain everything later.”

Again, he ignored the remark about Rey as his hot partner and went to call her. There was a knock and he carefully opened the door. Finn eyed him and came inside. He was milling around the kitchen, pretending not to listen to the next call.

Rey answered her phone and again he smiled at her voice. “Yeah, Niima.”

“Hey, Rey, I need you to come by my place,” he said, carefully. “I have a lead and your friend Finn is here. We have to talk about the case.”

“What? Kylo? Finn? What are you talking about?”

“Just…can you get here? I need you.”

“Yeah, sure, send me the address. But Kylo, what’s happening?”

“We’re going to get our killer, that’s what’s happening.”

He hung up and sent her the address. He turned to Finn and motioned towards the coffee machine.

“It isn’t rocket science to work a coffee machine,” he pointed. “Put on some coffee. I’m going to go change.”

He made a point of not wearing what he had worn the previous day. He called in the team as he changed his clothes and had to switch between shoulders, juggling his phone. He felt stiffer today and that was an odd sensation. Again, he had to make the point to Mundi that they had a lead. Whatever he could do to make the day feel somewhat different made him feel better, although it always needed to start the same. Something made him realize that the killer was waiting until he would try to change the day; that would mean he was in the loop again. The days that he deviated too far, he retaliated. There was something about the loop that he depended on. He hung up on the office as he heard Rey’s bag hitting the floor and realized he’d forgot to move the chair. He re-entered the kitchen as he was buttoning his shirt, forgetting the suit coat for now.

“What’s going on, Kylo?” She asked again. “Why’s Finn here…making coffee?”

Finn shrugged, pouring the coffee into three mugs. “He just told me to. Rey, I’m sorry, some guy gave me $50 to slip this note under his door. I didn’t know he had anything to do with the dead kids.”
Rey looked at Kylo, expectantly. “Can you please explain what’s going on?”

He moved to sit at the table and she slowly went to stand across from him. She was alive again and standing with her hand on her hip in his kitchen. She eyed the open part of his shirt and then met his eyes. Quickly buttoning it, he realized that had to calm down and make things seem real for all of them.

“Hey, sit down,” he said. “It’s going to be a long day, so drink some coffee. I’m sorry it’s not tea today.”

She sat down and eyed him. “Are you okay? You don’t look like you’ve slept at all.”

“It’s been a long, long day for me,” he took a mug. Apparently, it was very easy to screw up coffee. It would have to be tea from now on if Finn was to touch anything in his kitchen. “Listen, you both have to trust me on this. The team will be here soon and I need…I need you both to believe me.”

Rey sipped at the coffee, made a face and then looked at him. “Did you make this?”

“No, he did,” he gestured at Finn. “And he won’t do it again.”

“Hey, at least I tried. He’s been bossing me around all morning,” Finn sat down. “It tastes good to me.”

“It’s like…brown water. Don’t you make coffee downstairs, Finn?” Rey shook her head. “Kylo, please. I’m here now, tell me what’s going on.”

Again, he had to try to convince them, still afraid that she wouldn’t trust him.

“It’s going to sound unbelievable, but for me, it’s been the same day. Over and over again. This is the seventeenth time I’ve woken up and Finn has been at my door, leaving the note from the killer. It’s…I know what’s going to happen to a point. Whenever we start acting, we change things. It’s a time loop, and I can’t stop it until we catch whoever is taking the children. I need you both, and Dameron and your friend Rose, to help get him,” Kylo slowly looked at her. “Rey, I know that this will sound overwhelming, but I need your help today. I’ve been a terrible partner to you and haven’t given you a chance. I know you now, and I know what you can do. You always find a way of seeing things that I can’t see. Trust me today, again, please.”

Rey slightly squinted at him, then looked at Finn, and finally met his eyes again. “So, what you’re saying is that…you’ve been through all this. That explains why you’re so…impatient right now.”

“Yes, Rey, yes…it’s all…everyday, I have to get you all to believe me. And everyday…Rey, you have to trust me, please,” he threw up his hands. “I just need a good day.”

“What happens on bad days?” Finn asked, carefully.

He sighed. “Rey dies. Everyday before midnight, whether it’s a good or bad day. We need to stop the killer and save her. And the children. All of us, together.”

Rey took another sip of her coffee and then slowly pushed it away. “So, how am I here now? Alive?”

“I can die too. Always with you. Yesterday, we caught the accomplice trying to take the boy and he blew us up,” he also pushed aside the coffee. Finn, however, filled another mug. He was never buying coffee downstairs, he decided.
“Which boy?” Rey asked, narrowing her eyes. “Kylo, this all sounds so unbelievable.”

“I know. It’s…it keeps happening. You never remember, I’m sorry,” he shook his head. “But for the children, Rey. They know something. We’ve talked to the parents now that we know about all of these things, we can ask the right questions.”

She took a deep breath, eyeing first her mug and then him, regarding them both with equal suspicion. “You’re my partner…and what you just said sounds so unbelievable. But, if you think what’s happening has already happened, and it’s for the children, then I need to believe you. Kylo, I know I didn’t get to pick my partner, but I’m here now. And frankly, I don’t like the sound of dying and it looks like you don’t like it either.”

“No, I never do,” he tried to calm down, reaching for their day on the beach in his mind. “Rey…the team will be here soon. Thank you for believing me.”

“What else aren’t you telling me?” She asked, plainly.

“We’re dating.”

Finn snorted and Rey rolled her eyes. He felt his cheeks get warm.

“So, there’s that,” he finished.

She took a deep breath. “Let’s just…let’s deal with the case. The team will get here and then we’ll talk. Did you say that we needed to talk to Poe?”

“Yeah, he knows he needs to stick around, but we can’t tell the others until later. That throws him off,” he finished. “The killer, I mean.”

She nodded as the sound of footsteps approaching broke the conversation. He nodded at her and she returned the gesture, still looking at him with careful caution. But there was still a hint of wild in her eyes that he couldn’t miss. She took over the scene when the others set everything up. Dameron was always popping his head towards them and made him want the investigation to go faster. He took a chance and pulled him aside while Rey talked to the captain.

“Is there anyway you guys can finish things here sooner?” He said in a hushed tone.

Dameron nodded. “Yeah, we’ve got nothing. What’s going on with you today? You look awful.”

Why were they always saying that? “It’s been a long day. I’m more worried about your nephew.”

“Yeah, we need to talk about that.”

He looked at the rest of the people in his apartment. “They need to leave first.”

“Let me work my magic,” Dameron said, with a wave of his hand. It was getting easier and easier to talk to the other man and it felt good to have an ally. He moved to whisper to his assistant, who oddly looked more exhausted than on other days, then turn to the captain. It was still early, only just after seven. But the captain nodded to him and then turned to Rey.

“Looks like you get your wish,” he said, simply. “There’s nothing here, but I still don’t like how he came to his home. Follow the leads that you have, and then check in with us. I was beginning to doubt that you two were good partners.”

Rey nodded. “Well, we are. And I know him…now. We’re…we have a good lead on him.”
Tekka nodded to Rey and then looked at Kylo again. “Catch this monster.”

“We will, sir.”

Everyone cleared out and they were alone again. He had his team and he had to calm down. There was still a dull tingling in his hands. He shook his head and the other three looked at him, still confused.

“Okay, let me just say that all of this is crazy, but to me, this is the same day. And I want to apologize in advance if I sound tired, but we were so close yesterday — Rose saw our suspect. We need to get in touch with her,” he started. “Please, just, ask me something. Something that will get you all on my side.”

They sat, quietly on the sofas, not sure what to say.

Dameron was the first to clear his throat. “Have you been drinking recently? On drugs? Gone insane?”

“Probably insane.”

“Okay, so you’re insane. Sure. What’s my nephew’s name then?”

“Elias.”

Dameron made a face. “Where does my sister live?”

“Staten Island. In an apartment. She’s having money and drug problems.”

“Well, fuck,” he shrugged. “It’s too early for all of this, but I believe him. It could be a guess, but it’s a good guess. If what he told me about my nephew is true, I need to go soon. You guys, ask him.”

Rey shook her head. “I…I already believe him. But I could ask him something.”

“Anything, Rey.”

She narrowed her eyes. “If we’re…if we’re together where do I…”

“Kissed on the back of your neck,” he said, lowly. “Otherwise, you like to be on top.”

“Wow, way too personal!” Dameron exclaimed.

Kylo saw the tips of Rey’s ears redden, but she nodded. “He…I…I don’t even know.”

“I’m thinking of you two having sex and it’s weirding me out, so can we just move on with everything?” Finn said. “Fine, we believe you. Even though it’s creepy and weird. So what now?”

“We follow the plan, and we get closer to him,” Kylo said. “We were close to him yesterday—the other today—and that made him mad. He always comes after us, or does something…major when we close in on him. I…before we start this, I want you all to trust me and believe me that when this day gets right no one will die that doesn’t have to. Things will go wrong. Things might mess up, but if things go really wrong, just know that it will all start again tomorrow.”

“So we’re basically bailing out a sinking canoe with a funnel, great, okay,” Dameron rubbed his face. “So what, I go and get Elias and drop him at her ex’s?”
“Yes, but leave the note that you’ll find. Send the team there, but do it low key. I can’t…I can’t tell you what to say or do, but you just need to get to the endpoint of picking up the boy. He doesn’t want him, but your sister does. I don’t know why he picked your family and I’m sorry. It’s probably about me. At the same time, we need Finn to follow the homeless man. He’s an accomplice and he’s got a bomb strapped to him. Finn, I trust you, even though you make terrible coffee. Don’t ask me why, but if you believe me, then I trust you. I need you to use your judgement. He needs to be taken in, no matter what. Call in whatever you see, whenever you feel like things have gone too far. He doesn’t know you’re involved, the loop only starts when I wake up,” he stopped to breathe, realizing he was talking too fast.

Rey had grabbed her bag and was quickly writing everything down. “Wait, Kylo, what do you mean when the loop starts?”

“It starts when I wake up,” he shrugged. “What happens before, he can’t change. Or at least that’s what I think. That’s why he always gives the note to Finn. He can’t change that part. It’s all still set in motion when I wake up. And I think it’s driving him insane. He can’t come up here, but he can send someone when we’ve…deviated from his plan. That’s why I’m always watching that damned door.”

“Well, then we’ll keep driving him up the wall,” Dameron said, slamming his fist into his leg. “So, Finn follows the homeless man, and then? Goddammit, Kylo, this is coming out of nowhere.”

“I know, and again, I’m sorry.” He sighed.

“So what does Rose need to do?” Rey asked.

“She needs to get the notebook and map from the DA’s office. I think that he’s still involved somehow and we’ve got to look closer at that evidence. He’s not the killer, but the murderer might be after him too. Rose needs to get the map and the notepad and then wait and see what the suspect looks like. We need her to get the tapes to us today. I…we didn’t get them the other today,” he sighed. “We were too busy getting blown up.”

Rey nodded, grimly. “I’ll call her.”

“So why did I get the phones?” Finn asked.

“He’s tracking us and most of this won’t work if we can’t talk,” he motioned. “We have burner phones. I…we can’t send our phones to the station. I’m thinking that I pay a cabby and send them to Brighton.”

“Why there?”

“We had a beautiful day there, on the beach,” he met Rey’s eyes, blushing. “You love the beach.”

She slowly exhaled. “Okay, so I’ll call Rose. She’ll hate it, but I guess you already know that.”

“Yeah,” he said, stretching his arms behind his head. “But she can handle it. When you call her, tell her to make sure that the redheaded man gets taken in. And to watch out for this grey-haired older man. He’s our killer, I’m sure.”

She wrote down the details quickly. “Should we go talk to her directly?”

He shook his head. “No, we need to go soon. There isn’t time. We need to go back to the office with Poe and get the next parents’ case files. We’ve only interviewed less than half of them. The Jinn boy said something strange the other today and I need to see if it’s happening to the other
kids.”

Rey nodded. “So, we have our tasks. Finn, Kylo will text you the address. Poe, go after your nephew. I’ll talk to Rose and then what?”

“We’ll meet up at the station,” he shrugged. “Maybe go to Maz’s.”

“You know Maz?”

He waved his hand. “I know…too much.”

“Yeah, you brought up what she likes in bed, that’s too much,” Poe snarked.

He managed to grin at the remark and Rey shook her head, blushing.

“So, let’s go. Finn, where’s the phones?” Dameron got to his feet and Finn began programming in the mutual numbers.

“He’ll be waiting outside the building, so just look like you’re going back to work,” Kylo said. “Poe, you’ve taken my car before. Today, I think take a cab.”

“Got it, sure.”

Finally, they parted. They let Finn and Dameron leave first and he forced Rey to go change. He stood by his couch, eyeing the door when she was away from him. They were finally alone when she turned sharp eyes towards him, fixing her hair.

“So you know what I like in bed, what else is there?”

He looked at her softly. “You…you’re kind. You work hard, and really pay attention to detail. You hated math in high school and hate camping, because you almost froze on a trip in Colorado. And you only became a cop because you were…attacked in high school.”

She set her jaw firmly before replying. “You know about that?”

“Yes, and I’m sorry. I’m so sorry Rey.”

She sighed. “The only way I can get a boyfriend is that I don’t remember him the next morning and we work together. That’s so typically me that I want to scream.”

“To be fair, I…I feel the same way.”

She smirked. “So, back to the station. To pick up the case files for the next parents.”

“Yes, I’ve…we’ve already talked to the Windus, the Galias, the Piells and the Jinns. There are what? Nine more families?” He sighed. “We get the next two and then see what the others come up with.”

“Who are the Jinns?”

“The next boy he needs to take. Oh, shit, Rey I need to call them.”

He moved to make the call and she stood by, watching him from the doorway. He called the number he had memorized, pacing at the other side of the room. He talked to Kristina and tried to make her believe him.
“Yes, ma’am, we’re making calls to anyone with children of this age from the school district. Stay away from the park. We will be by in the afternoon to check on you. Lock your door and if anything happens, you can call me at this number,” he said, watching Rey from the corner of his eye.

He heard Kristina gasp and then agree. “Thank you, detective. We were…planning on going to the park and maybe the zoo. He’s been so…not himself all morning.”

“Put on a movie or something different on TV. Something he hasn’t seen before,” he said. “We’ll be by in the afternoon, Kristina. Take care of your son.”

He ended the call and turned to Rey. “So, now, back to the station.”

“And back to our conversation about how we’re dating and I don’t know about it,” she smirked. “Let’s go.”

They caught the cab to the station and she softly prodded him with questions.

“It’s like you’re a different person,” she looked at him. “I wouldn’t have trusted you if you didn’t seem so…different.”

“Who am I and what have I done with your partner?”

She smiled. “Yeah, that exactly.”

She found his hand and gently squeezed it. “Kylo, if I die every day…how….how do you wake up every morning and just go on?”

He sighed, studying her hand in his. “I see so many of the times that you die whenever I close my eyes, Rey. You’ve…we’ve sometimes died without any pain. But the last time you were shot…I thought you’d make it. You died in such pain and I can’t stop thinking about it.”

Again, she took a long pause before replying. “You…you’ve never looked at me like this before. No one has looked at me like this before. It’s like I’m a real person, Kylo. And it might just be the case, but you’re different. Am I doing this to you? Making you kinder?”

“Yes, all of it,” he sighed. “You make me want to get to tomorrow. As long as it’s with you.”

“Kylo, you know that this is all going over my head but…I’m here. We’ll work through this,” she said as they reached the station.

He quickly told the cab driver to wait and they entered the office, grabbing the files and leaving before anyone could acknowledge them. They were either at the press conference or at the Dameron scene. They were in and out quickly. It was when they were outside that he paid the cab driver to take their phones to Brighton. They could take another cab from there.

She took his hand as they walked down the street. “Just to see what it feels like.”

He looked down at their hands and smiled at her. “I don’t deserve you.”

When they found another cab, they went through the next case and gave the address to the next child, the Tiins. Next would be the Trebors, if they had time. He filled her in on the conversations he’d had with the other parents, careful not to leave out any details.

“You are different,” she said again. “You sound so…patient, when you’re not frustrated by
something about the loop. God, Kylo, we could have gotten so far if you had only been like this from the start.”

“I know, I know, don’t rub it in.”

She laughed, stroking her thumb in a small circle on his hand. “So…when we’re together…”

“It’s something beautiful, Rey. I promise.”

She blushed lightly and nodded. “You…you sound like all of this is all real.”

“I know I can’t speak for you, but for me, it is.”

“Kylo, it’s been a long time since someone has cared about me,” she met his eyes again. “I never expected that it would be you.”

They had pulled up to a rather simple apartment building and he lightly kissed her hand. “Just…just trust me. Please. I love you. And I need you.”

She looked at their hands and then up to him. “Do you really mean that?”

“All of it,” he shook his head. “I’ve seen you die so many times. But every day I start it all over again, hoping I can save you.”

“Let’s…let’s talk to the parents first. And then, we’ll discuss all of this.”

He kept checking over his shoulder when they were outside. As they made the call up, he still wondered how he found these specific children. He hoped that everyone was falling into place elsewhere. It was still early, but Poe must have his nephew safe by now, given the empty state of the office, and Finn must be out after the homeless man. Rose would be at work, ready to make her attempt at the DA’s office. It was the same, but different.

The Tiins buzzed them up and they rode the elevator to their floor. Rey suddenly gripped him by the hips and kissed him roughly. He responded, pulling her close. Gripping her back, he reached down to grab her ass and feel all of her.

“What was that for?” He asked.

“I just...you’ve been teasing me all morning, with those looks,” she shrugged, wiping her mouth slightly. “I needed to know what it felt like.”

“There’s so much more, Rey,” he said, a promise in his voice. “Let’s talk to them and then see where the day takes us.”

The elevator dinged. “Live like there’s no tomorrow, right?”

“Yes, because there isn’t one!”

They exchanged broad grins outside of the elevator before composing themselves. They reached the apartment door and tried to put on real faces. Mrs Tiin answered the door, still looking heartbroken after losing her child over a week ago.

“Hi, ma’am you buzzed us up?” Kylo said, showing his badge. “We have some follow-up questions about your son?”

The woman looked at them and then nodded. “Yes, I…If this is about Kee. Then yes. Come in.”
Again, they were in another home of another family that had lost a child. It was stepping into another dimension of grief and they were just observers. The Tiins were not like the Gallias; this space was dirty and small, filled with grief, and totally disorganized. There were dirty clothes and towels tossed on the floor and open bottles everywhere. He thought he smelled a dull hint of incense somewhere.

“What have you found out about our boy?” A male voice asked from a group of pillows on the floor, where there should be a living room set. The man was clearly drunk and Kylo sighed, sorry for the woman that stood beside him.

“Mrs Tiin, we can come back,” he started. “When it’s…better.”

She shook he head. “It will never get better. But I can make coffee.”

“Please,” Kylo said. “We would really appreciate it.”

They left Mrs Tiin to the kitchen and sat across from Mr Tiin, who was taking occasional swigs from a flask, not caring that they were police. The house looked like it had been turned upside down. The area they were sitting in looked like it had become his bedroom. Losing their son had torn them apart. These parts made him ache about the brief joy that they had shared in the elevator.

They slowly looked at the broken man and he frowned. “I’m so sorry about your son.”

“He’s gone, I can’t fix it.”

“But…we have questions about how he was acting before he was taken. Can you…do you feel like you can answer them?”

He had fished a wine bottle out from behind a cushion and took a long drink. “Yeah, I guess. If I can rememberrr…”

He slurried a few more syllables before his wife rejoined them with coffee. She tried to ignore how he poured more liquor into his cup and turned to them.

“Please, ask us anything.”

“Was your son acting…strange before he was taken?” Kylo asked,

She looked distant. “He never acted normal, he’s like his father. He’s had to miss school for his ADHD in the spring. I just thought he was…being him. He stopped wanting to go to school and stopped liking anything. Even his favourite food was boring to him.”

“What do you remember about the last day that you had with him? Start with the smells and sounds,” Rey said softly. “Just…think of it like that day was today.”

The father rolled to sit up and the wife cleared her throat.

“He was…wasn’t happy that morning. He told me he hated us so many times, I can’t even count. I…I’m sorry that I didn’t say all this before,” she sat there, sadly on the arrangement of throw pillows

“We didn’t realize these leads until now, it’s not your fault.” Kylo said. “Don’t feel that this is your fault, in any way.”

She looked from her husband to back to them. “I still let him out of the house that day, it’s all my
fault.”

“None of it is,” he shook his head again. “I know that. Did he draw or make anything strange?””

She sighed. “I…I can show you.”

“Yes, ma’am, we would appreciate it.”

Again, they were left alone with the alcoholic husband and his hidden bottles.

“Come on, you want some?” He waggled one in the air.

“No, sir, it’s fine,” Rey answered.

The wife returned and he could relax when he got the boy’s sketchbook. He was almost a better artist than the last one. The pictures were of all of the faces, again, sketched in a child’s hand in pen. The redhead, the tattooed man, and finally their suspect. He studied them carefully before turning them over to Rey. She was here now, and needed to know.

“He never drew people. He said they were the men from his dream,” she sighed.

The husband got up to stumble from the room and Rey put a concerned hand on the woman’s leg. “Ma’am, there are victim’s services available to you. Perhaps you and your husband would benefit from having someone to talk to.”

She shook her head. “He was like this…before Kee disappeared. It hasn’t gotten better or worse. I’m…I’m going to leave him. My parents want me to come home and I can’t stand to be here anymore. We share nothing now that we have lost our son.”

“I’m so sorry,” Rey said, her voice genuine. “What do you do for work?”

“We’re both pharmacists. I work at the county hospital but he…he hasn’t worked in years,” she looked at her coffee and frowned. “I thought that you already knew what we did for work?”

Kylo had to hide his reaction. “The investigation went very fast and we might have missed some important things.”

She nodded. “Have you…figured out how why he’s killing them? All of the children?”

“We are getting closer,” Kylo said, moving to stand. “Thank you for your time.”

Rey followed him. “Don’t be afraid to reach out for support. There are too many people alone in this world who don’t have to be.”

The woman nodded, clutching her coffee cup. “One day. One day, I’ll be okay.”

She seemed to be saying it more to herself than to them. They saw themselves out and her shoulders sagged when they left the apartment. He gently rubbed her back as they headed to the elevator, the emotions shifting from the previous conversation.

“We should see what the others have,” she said, absently.

He nodded, and checked his burner phone. Things were in play; Poe had his nephew, Finn had called in the homeless man. Now they were just waiting for Rose to send the redhead in for something. He contemplated telling Poe to search for the tattooed man, Maul, again, but it seemed pointless; he would always be the wildcard until they got to where he was staying. An idea struck
“Where would a trained, German assassin stay in New York?”

She shrugged. “I guess somewhere anonymous and cheap. But if he flew in internationally, there would have to be a record somewhere. He doesn’t need a visa, but everyone has to fill out that stupid form.”

He quickly changed the plan. “How do we get a hold of those forms? Who do we need to call? They would have had to fingerprint him when he arrived.”

“How are you sure he would have flown on a real passport?”

“His face is so…distinctive. He could have used another name, but if we can go through the pictures from the international flights in the past two or three weeks, we might nail down when he got here and where he might be staying.” he wished he had his normal phone at that moment because this phone was just a brick with only the other numbers programmed in.

“Let’s go talk to Poe, he might know what to do,” Rey reached for his hand and squeezed it. He leaned over to kiss her and the elevator dinged. Her ears were red as they went to hail a cab.

Taking a chance, he leaned down to whisper in her ear. “You’re so beautiful.”

“Focus, Kylo,” she said with a hint of a smile in her eyes. “Let’s go talk to Dameron.”

“Hmm,” He mused. “And then the Jinns. God, there’s so much to do today. We still need to figure out why he’s after the DA.”

“Could it be the guy running against him?”

A cab pulled up and they headed back to the station house. Kylo again had trouble remembering the name of the DA’s opponent. “Yeah, Kenobi. Maybe it’s worth checking him out. We’ll ask Dameron about it when we get to the office. We should talk to the Jinns, but I’m worried it will just end like it did yesterday.”

“What happened then?”

“We were blown up again, like I said,” he shook his head. “But the boy is in the loop. Children don’t remember things the same way that we do so he was much more bored with it all.”

“Are you bored?”

He looked at her with a light smile. “No, I’ve got you. How could that be boring?”

“I’m pretty boring,” she shrugged. “And since we only really have one day together…aside from the case, that can’t be exciting.”

“It is, just trust me,” he said as they pulled up and left the cab. There was so much more running around and he hated having to depend on other drivers.

But he felt somewhat daring and hugged her when they were at the entrance to the station house. “Maybe…maybe I should be less serious.”

She pulled away and looked at him sceptically. “How would that help things?”

He noticed the stream of stressed faces moving around them. There was no humour there, there
was no softness. They were forgetting their own humanity. He knew how he had to solve the day, but he needed to look at it a different way.

“Hey, so, put yourself in my shoes.”

“Your big, black dress shoes that I’ve never liked.”

He raised his eyebrows. “What’s wrong with my shoes?”

“Nothing, nothing,” she smirked again. “Just…your idea?”

“When we’re with the families, we can’t be anywhere but with them but…when we’re not in those moments, let’s think about this like training. We have another chance, tomorrow,” he shrugged, trailing off.

She shook her head. “Except for the fact that I might die, horribly.”

“Rey, I…” He started before an excited Dameron jogged up to them and interrupted the thought.

“Whoa, hello there, what’s going on?” He eyed them. “What’s with all the smiles?”

Kylo shook his head. “I guess you had to be there.”

Dameron rolled his eyes. “I swear to God, if you’re on drugs or something, I’ll punch you in the face. Come on, the DA has been raising hell all morning.”

They again avoided their corner of the house in favour of Poe’s neutral lab. He looked overly pressed today and that made Kylo frown.

“So, what are you guys going to do now?” Poe asked, sitting down heavily to look at a lab sample. “I can’t even see straight anymore.”

“So, I guess we can’t ask for another favour?” Kylo asked, moving the framed photo of Elias with his hand.

Dameron leaned forward, dramatically. “Go on?”

“We need to find that assassin, the German one, Maul. Can you get into the incoming international connections?”

He rolled his eyes. “I have so much else to do, but I can make a call. I know a guy. Any word from the others?”

Rey nodded. “From the last text, Finn had taken in the homeless guy and the redheaded man showed and Rose fixed it while we were at the family’s. She’s still waiting on our killer.”

Kylo shook his head. “We need to go talk to the Jinns, then we’ll be back here to check out the rest of the information.”

Dameron just sighed. “So, what’s with this boy? Why’s he different?”

“He…I think he’s in the loop too. I need to ask him. Again,” he shook his head. “Poe, look, I know that your nephew is in trouble, but I’m so glad that he’s safe.”

Dameron slowly nodded. “Normally, I would be mad but you look like you actually care. That’s fine with me.”
“Find the assassin and text us what you know,” Kylo moved to stand and Rey followed him back out of the house.

Once again, they were on the familiar path out to the Jinn household by taxi. He scratched his neck, aimlessly watching the city pass.

“Why are you attracted to me?” He asked.

Rey looked at him and blushed. “I… I thought it was just a crush. It’s hard to forget the first feelings I got when I first met you, before you started ignoring me. But I guess it’s more than that now.”

“Well, on other days.”

She leaned forward to suddenly kiss him and he accepted the gesture. She slowly parted, meeting his eyes.

“I… I like your eyes and your body. It’s strong and you wear things that set it off. I… you have nice arms. And legs. The way you wear your pants is distracting. And, I like your hair…I… I want to touch it all the time,” she sounded embarrassed as she spoke. “I didn’t mean to kiss you right now.”

“It was fine, I liked it.”

She flushed again turning towards the window of the taxi. He leaned forward to whisper in her ear.

“I’m sorry if that was embarrassing.”

Looking back to him, she shook her head. “It’s… isn’t it was couples do? Say what they like about the other?”

He slowly sat back, losing the humour he wanted from before. “How long have you felt alone?”

She met his eyes but looked distant. “For as long as I can remember.”

“Rey, I know you won’t remember this tomorrow, but I want you to know that you’re not alone anymore,” he grasped her hand. “We have this. And I will help you remember.”

She shook her head. “It… it’s still not fair that you have to be together with someone who will die every day.”

“The heartbreak is worth every smile, every kiss, every moment that I get with you.”

Their quiet was broken by the taxi driver calling out the address.

“Wait here,” Kylo directed the driver, again moving up the stairs.

This time, when the door opened, Kristina looked happy rather than overwhelmed. In the background, they saw Quirin jumping on the furniture. It was a house filled with life, a shift from the heavy mourning at the Tiins.

“Hello, we’re detectives Ren and Niima, we called earlier today?” He said, carefully.

The woman nodded. “Yes, and we’re just wondering how you knew…”

“Hi!” Quirin shouted, running for the door. “You’re here!”
Kristina looked from her son to the detectives. “Do you…do you know them, Qui?”

He shrugged. “I sorta do. Can I go talk to them, mom?”

She looked from her son to the pair. “Well, I guess so.”

The boy grabbed both of their hands, leading them upstairs. He seemed overjoyed to see them and Kylo had to clamp down on the panic rising about the feeling.

“Quirin, what happened the last time that we were here?”

Quirin brought them down to sit on the floor. “We blew up. It sucked. My ears still hurt.”

Rey looked from the toys at her feet up to Kylo. “How…how has it happened other days, Quirin?”

The boy started building a piece of Lego, clicking the coloured bricks together with steady hands. It was such a simple moment that Kylo never wanted to leave it. He was so innocent and didn’t deserve what might happen to him.

“Well, I remember better now, after K…K…what’s your name?”

“Kylo.”

“Not Ben?”

Kylo froze at the moment. If he told the boy his real name then that might ruin everything. Would that break the loop without them knowing it? A part of him panicked about waking up the next morning, Rey being dead and another child dead with her.

“No, I’m sorry Quirin.”

The boy made a face. “I still don’t know who Ben is.”

“Hey, you know what?” Kylo leaned down. “If he takes you again, and asks you, pretend that you know, but don’t remember. Let’s trick him.”

The boy’s eyes widened. “You know him too?”

“Not really, but we’re going to find him.”

Quirin nodded, looking from Rey to Kylo. His small face puzzled over a rising thought. “You guys look sad.”

“It’s a hard day,” Rey said, looking at the blocks on the floor. “We’re worried about you.”

“No remember too?”

“No,” she shook her head. “I wish that I did.”

The boy again rolled his shoulders, a brief annoyance creasing the corner of his mouth. “It’s not fun. You just fall asleep a bunch of times. And the man gets mad and says he’ll hurt mom and dad, but he never does. And then it’s always the same things on TV. And I can’t use mom’s phone, but she let me today!”

Kylo smiled. “I told her to.”
The boy jumped up to hug him and he caught a happy glance from Rey. That’s when an idea crossed his mind.

“Hey, Quirin, do you remember where he takes you?”

The boy shrugged out of the hug. “It was a long ways away, I told you. I don’t remember much.”

Kylo took a deep and long breath and looked at Rey as he talked to the boy. “Quirin, if…if we’re going to fix this, we need to know where you are, right? I…I don’t…uh.”

Suddenly, tears caught in his throat and he couldn’t look at the boy anymore. Rey, in all her thoughtfulness, pulled him into her lap.

“I think what Kylo means to say is that the next time we come to talk to you, can you do something for us?” She asked, hugging the boy. “If he takes you in the park, what happens?”

“The angry man takes me and then the bad man hurts me, but way later. But if I’m here, then the ugly man takes me,” he hugged her closer. “I wanna be a police. What do I do?”

Rey exhaled, locking eyes with Kylo, asking if this was the right way to go. “How…how much can you count?”

“Oh, I can count to 100 in English AND 100 in Spanish!”

She took a deep breath, her eyes still on Kylo for asking her to do this. “Then…when you get taken in the park, next time, just count. Count how many times you get to 100. We…we might not get you that day, but we’ll help you another day, okay? Just don’t be afraid.”

The boy hugged her and then turned to hug Kylo. “I promise, I’ll do a good job.”

He gently held the boy and sighed into his small shoulder. “None of this is your fault.”

“No, I know,” he said, pulling away. “Can you guys build Legos? Mom actually gave me a new set today!”

Kylo looked at the toys spread out on the floor then back at his partner. “Quirin, when we see you again, we’ll build Legos, okay?”

The boy shook his head from side to side then shrugged. “I…I don’t like going to sleep. But what happens when I stay asleep? When it’s not today anymore?”

Rey saw the look in Kylo’s eyes and took the boy gently by the hand. “That won’t happen. Just…count for us. And we’ll find you.”

The boy nodded and went back to his building. They had a schedule to keep and slowly left him. His parents looked at them with surprise when they came downstairs.

“He hasn’t looked that happy in a while,” Mats said. “What’s happening?”

Kylo nodded and made up a lie. “He thinks he saw someone at school that might have been one of our suspects. Sir, do you have anywhere else you could go today? Family? Upstate?”

Kristina, by his side, nodded. “We have my cousin and my mom.”

“Go to your cousin’s, right now. Don’t call him, just go,” Kylo agreed, scribbling down the number to his burner phone. “Call us if there is anything.”
She looked at him seriously. “There is something about him, right? That would explain his mood?”

He sighed. “Just take care of him. It will…it will be okay.”

She looked pale, but nodded.

Rey gently took his hand as they walked down the steps. “Was that the best thing to do?”

“If we can talk to him, and get an idea where he is taken to, we can find him.”

As they flagged down a taxi, she sighed. “So, we let him die again today?”

“Rey.”

She looked at him and he saw tears shining in her eyes. She blinked hard, shifting her head away at the disturbing thought of sacrificing the gentle and charming boy who she had just met.

“Rey, I…I hope this will be the last time. I don't think that he'll find him, but if he does…”

“He remembers, Kylo.”

“So do I,” he gently took her by the arms, facing her. “I won’t forget those days. Okay?”

She flushed a little. “Well, let’s talk to Dameron and the others. Maybe Kenobi can give us more information.”

They were silent for a few minutes and he briefly closed his eyes. Flashes of previous days and his own memories made him open them again, rubbing his face. She looked at him with concern.

“You’re not okay.”

“No, nothing about this is okay,” he sighed. “But we have talked to another family. And the boy remembers from yesterday.”

She nodded. “Anything that’s different is good, right?”

“Yeah.”

The cab drove through the city and she undid her seatbelt to rest her head on his lap. He wanted to make sure she was safe, but the connection made him feel better about the entire day. It made him think again how alone she must have felt. The same emptiness had haunted him his entire life, stemming from his father’s death and the ripples it had spread through his family. He stroked her hair and sighed at how tired she looked. He never could take away all of her fears, but he wanted to try his best.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“For what?”

“For…all of this. For being stuck with me.”

She sat up to meet his eyes. “I wish that I could remember the other days, I really do. But you’re here for me now. I really appreciate that. I’m not stuck with anyone.”

He smirked and she rested her head on his lap again. It would feel good when they would have a tomorrow together.
Finn texted them that Rose had seen their killer and had a photo of him. He exhaled deeply at the thought. They would chase the Kenobi lead today; tomorrow, they would look for the clues about the tattooed man and whoever this mystery man might be. They also had to give Quirin time to count tomorrow; today he was safe. But the dark-clad man was still lurking in the corners of his mind and he needed to know Quirin would be okay today.

Reaching the station, he reluctantly let her go. They moved to the lab, avoiding their corner of the office again, and found a stressed looking Dameron arguing with his assistant. His eyes brightened when he saw them and then sighed.

“Everyone is looking for you two,” he said. “The DA left a while ago, but goddamn this case is something else.”

Kylo nodded. “Finn should be here soon with Rose and the notepad. It won’t say much, but at least it will keep him agitated. Hey, what do you know about the Kenobi campaign?”

Dameron rolled his eyes. “Am I expected to know everything? Yeah, but okay I can look it up. Sit down and make yourselves comfortable.”

They sat down in two vacant office chairs as Poe moved to the laptop at the corner of the room. He hummed to himself and looked at them.

“So, yeah, there’s a fundraiser this evening. Some black-tie shit,” he showed them the website, announcing the event and how much it cost. It was a $700 a plate dinner, aimed at funding the last push of his campaign. Kylo quickly memorized the location and the time of 6 p.m., along with other details that might help them. This would help figure out if this man had anything to do with the DA.

Kylo firmed his face. “Can we borrow your credit card?”

“Goddammit, why?”

“Because he’s tracking mine. Even my mother’s card.”

“You’re like forty, why do you have your mother’s credit card?”

“I’m 34 and I just do. We need to get into that fundraiser.”

Dameron groaned, loudly. “You’ll pay me back right?”

“Yes, tomorrow.”

Dameron narrowed his eyes. “Isn’t…isn’t your deal that here is no tomorrow?”

Kylo shrugged. “One day, I’ll pay you back.”

“Just…just take it,” he thrust the card in his direction from a rather ratty wallet. “Now, let me in on what the boy said. And anything else that might help me understand what we’re going to find with this map and note.”

Kylo handed it to Rey. “Call and book the tickets.”

“Not fair I have to work and you can go rub shoulders with snobs,” Dameron mumbled. “What could they even serve for $700?”

Rey glanced at the number and nodded, moving into the corner to call. “Wait, Kylo, we can’t use
Again, he had to take a chance. “Say that you’re Poe Dameron. I don’t think they’ll question it. Put me down as Ben Solo.”

“Why those names?”

“Poe’s name is on the card, so one of us should be him. It sounds like a woman’s name,” he caught a glare from Poe at the remark, but continued. “And Ben Solo is my real name.” He moved to the other side of the room to look at photographs of the note.

“Your real name?” She asked. "You lied to Quirin."

“I’ll tell you later.”

He grabbed a sheet of blank paper and a couple of pens from Poe’s desk and began sketching the patterned of tattoos he remembered from the assassin.

“Poe, this will help you find the accomplice,” he heard Rey place the order. “This is what he looks like. Have you found a way to look through recent international arrivals.”

Dameron eyed the crude drawing. “Kind of distinctive?”

“He’s Ulrik Maul, an assassin from Germany,” he nodded. “We need to figure out when he got here and where he might be.”

Poe stood and stretched. “Yeah, I think my guy is here now. Just hang out here for a while. Maybe order lunch? Since, you know, I’m paying.”

Dameron was still gone when Finn and Rose showed up. They both looked confused as they found the lab. Rey smiled and hugged her friend.

“Rose, I don’t know how to thank you for this,” Rey said, taking the notebook and the map.

“Yeah, that redheaded guy was a real jerk,” she shook her head. “But the other guy, he was weird, but not too creepy.”

“Show us, please,” Kylo stood. Rey glared at him and he remembered that he hadn’t met her again that day. “Sorry, I’m Detective Ren, Rey’s partner.”

“Hi,” she said with a small smile. “Finn was telling me that you’re in some sort of time loop thing? How is that even possible? I mean, it’s totally nuts. Have you met me before?”

“Yes,” he nodded. “It…I’m sorry to pull you into it.”

“Whatever helps those kids,” she sighed. She reached into her pocket to retrieve a small printout. “Sorry it’s in black and white.”

This was the first time they’d seen their killer’s face. Kylo stared at the man and Rey moved his arm, trying to study it as well. He looked normal. A somewhat long face, high cheekbones. He must have been well over 70, judging by the shape of his mouth and eyes. He wished he had a bigger and clearer picture, but this would have to do. His hair was mostly grey, but there were darker spots. His hair was slightly curly. This was the man. This was the man he was hunting. His heartbeat echoed in his ears as he narrowed his eyes.

“Can we keep this?” He asked.
“Of course.”

Dameron returned and seemed surprised to find so many people in his space.

“So, are you guys taking off, or can we, you know, take a break?”

“Yeah, let’s…let’s order food. We still have so much to do today, but eating is good,” he looked from Rey to the others. Finn must have been up since dawn and so had Rey and Dameron. Rose was on shift work so who knows the last time she had a full night’s sleep.

They ordered Chinese and took over the lab tech’s lunchroom, working as they ate. Kylo slowly went over the clues with the others, pointing out his mistakes and previous errors: how he still didn’t know what the truck had to do with the day and still didn’t know where he took the children.

“But we have so many more pieces now,” Rey shook her head. “If we can figure out if Kenobi is connected to this, he might help us find out what this has to do with the DA?”

He agreed, looking around the small table at his team. How could they just accept what he was saying? He guessed that it was easy to believe him when the things he said would happen actually happened. Rey, on the other hand, just put her faith and caring into him again. She needed someone to care about her and he was grateful that she was letting that person be him.

They cleared away the food and it was still the early afternoon. Rose had to get back to work and so did Finn. Dameron was just staring out into space, realizing he was still at work.

“Just check in with us if you see anything strange,” Kylo said. “Thank you again for going along with this.”

Rose shrugged. “I never get to work with Rey on any real police stuff. This felt…nice.”

Finn nodded. “I’m just glad I’m not a suspect.”

“And that I didn’t shoot you.”

“What? You’ve shot me?”

“On another today…like ten days ago or more.”

“That’s still so weird, man,” Finn shook his head.

They both left, chatting lightly in the hallway.

“Well, they get along,” Dameron stretched his hands behind his head. “So what now?”

Kylo sighed. “Check out the notebook and the map. And see if you get any hits on the Maul guy. We’re…we’re going to go through some mug books and see if we find our killer. Then…then we’ll head to the Kenobi dinner.”

“Sounds good to me.”

They found an unused station near Poe’s domain and set to work, going through the hundreds of thousands of men that might be their suspect. The picture quality wasn’t good enough to do a point-by-point search and it would take too much time to plot it anyway. He was absorbed in his search when he suddenly looked up to find Rey gone. Instantly, the rush of panic took over and he moved into the hallway to look for her. He was breathing heavily and rounded a corner, nearly running into her carrying a pair of coffee cups.
“Hey,” she said. “God, I didn’t mean to scare you.”

He shook his head. “Just... just tell me if you’re going anywhere.”

She nodded, looking away with a hint of guilt.

They worked in silence the rest of the afternoon until his eyes started to ache and his back hurt. He stood and stretched. It was about 4 p.m. They had a few hours to get ready. Rey also stood, looking fairly exhausted.

“What do we do now?”

He held up Poe’s credit card. “We go shopping, and then we go to dinner. The event starts at six. We have a couple of hours to buy some decent clothes and change.”

“Do you ever plan on paying him back?”

He looked at the card and then back at her. “If we get a real tomorrow, I’ll pay him back. Don’t worry.”

Quietly leaving out the side door, avoiding their colleagues again, they flagged down another taxi and he retraced his steps back to the same dress shop that he brought her to on the day at the beach. The clerk again helped her find something, but this time it was tight and black. He looked at her with restrained attraction and almost laughed when she exclaimed how awkward she felt.

“Pretend we’re going undercover, and in a way we are,” he said. “Be in this day with me, okay?”

She frowned, fixing the dress. “Does this actually look nice?”

“It looks great,” he nodded. “You always look great.”

The clerk brought her a pair of low heels and he almost dreaded how much they’d cost, but they matched outfit. A handbag and earrings later, they left the shop.

“I have a proper tux at my place. We can try to go home or just try somewhere else,” he mumbled as they left. He was surprised that Dameron’s credit card could take the $1100 that the ensemble cost.

“Maybe we should just rent one, right? He’s watching your place?”

He nodded. “And he thinks we’re in Brighton again, hiding. Come on, you can watch me try on clothes and hate it.”

She actually smiled, the garment bag over her shoulder. “As long as Poe keeps paying.”

They both suspected the card was reaching its limit, but the booking was already made. Again, it felt strange to just move around and not be on duty, although they technically were. Finn texted them to say that nothing had happened so far and that felt somewhat okay. He was at his other job now. They found the nearest suit rental store and he took a moderately priced tuxedo. He didn’t care, but noticed how Rey looked at him when he put on the outfit.

“You should dress up more often,” she moved behind him to look at him in the mirror. “Honestly, Kylo, this day... everything. What are we doing?”

“Our jobs,” he said, fixing the undershirt. “I look... okay, right?”
“You look nice. Get it and let’s go.”

They were still surprised that the credit card went through. Maybe Dameron wasn’t as stretched financially as he had thought.

“May we change here?” Kylo asked the clerk. “We’re in a bit of a rush.”

The disinterested man shrugged. “Well, you’ll have to return the suit anyway. We’ll hold onto your things, sure. They might not all be here when you get back.”

“That works. Can you call us a cab too?”

The clerk nearly rolled his eyes, but went to the front of the store to make the call. Rey nodded and quickly changed, picking up on his thoughts. They needed to get to the venue early and assess if there was any threat. Standing side by side in the mirror, Rey turned a bit to smile at him.

“This still feels weird,” she shook her head.

“Everything will be fine, Miss Dameron,” he reached for her hand.

“Sure, Mr Solo.”

His gun hidden under his tuxedo jacket and Rey’s in her handbag, they caught the cab to the hotel where the event was being held. It would be just after five by the time they arrived. He kept glancing down the front of Rey’s top and she eventually caught his eyes.

“You can’t wear a bra in a dress like this, Kylo. Stop staring.”

“I just like it when you’re wearing different clothes. It makes it feel less like an endless today,” he studied her curious face. “It makes it easier to put myself in the moment. He…he could be there. And we have to be ready.”

“Should we tell the security detail that we’re cops? I mean, they might search for our guns.”

He frowned, again missing that thought. “We’ll see if we meet anyone we can trust. You seem to know a lot of people.”

She smirked. “Well, I don’t hate people, so it’s a bit easier for me.”

The car pulled up to the hotel and they made their way into the lobby. The ballroom that the fundraiser would be held in was on the second floor. He scanned the foyer, trying to notice anything out of the ordinary. Nothing so far. Approaching the front desk, they asked about the details for the evening.

“Oh, you’re a little early, but I think you can head upstairs already,” the clerk happily answered. “I have no idea how this voting thing works, but Dr Kenobi seems like a really nice man.”

“Is he here already?” Rey asked. “We’ve been dying to meet him.”

Kylo eyed her at her choice of words. All right. Two can play at that game. “My wife just means that we’re big supporters and we were very thankful that we could get plates at the last minute.”

“Well, that’s great,” the clerk smiled, missing his tone. “If you go up now, you might get to talk to him a little.”

She gestured towards the entrance and Rey punched Kylo hard in the arm.
“Your wife.”

“Please, dear, don’t argue in public.”

She slipped her arm under his and shoved him a little. “Fine, be that way.”

He smirked, helping her up the stairs. They walked up to the next floor, eying anyone they went by for a potential threat. It mostly just hotel workers, running up with flowers or trays of glasses. Arriving early caught the security guards by surprise; they were mostly milling around. This was maybe a good plan after all.

The event planner greeted them at the door. A young woman with a big smile and dark-red lipstick waved at them, mainly focused on Kylo. “Hi, you guys must be early. You’re welcome to come inside, of course. Dr Kenobi is already chatting with folks. Your names?”

“Dameron and Solo,” he said, catching a glimpse of the guest list. There were no names that he immediately recognized. “We bought our plates late.”

“Oh, yes! Here you are at the end,” she signaled them to go inside. “Our security isn’t quite ready yet. So promise me you guys don’t have any guns and we’re good to go.”

“We’re lawyers, so we only wish we had guns,” he smiled at the young woman, quickly casting a look down her blouse.

The woman blushed, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. “That would solve a lot of problems, wouldn’t it? Go on in and find your places. Table 24. I’m here if you have any questions.” She waved at them, with a small wink to Kylo.

“Since when do you flirt?” Rey said, pulling closer to him.

“Are you jealous?”

“Well, we only got away with this because she liked you.”

The fundraising space was mainly dark, leading towards a brightly lit stage. Everything was still in motion, being set up. There was a small crowd of people milling around the edge of the stage, talking loudly. He dreaded the thought of the speeches that would litter the night. He had too many bad memories of being bored at his mother’s fundraisers; everyone just talked for hours. He sighed and reminded himself again to call her.

“What happened? You got all stiff.”

“It’s nothing,” he spotted their table and sat down. If Kenobi was playing the politics game, he’d notice early arrivals and invite himself over. “My mother was a politician. She was in the state senate when I was a teenager and most of my adult life she was in the lower house. If she’s not elected, she's working on someone else's thing. She was always talking about different ideals, mostly about liberties and the balance with state control. I’ve been to a few of these, but most of the time I was never old enough to drink, so they were incredibly long and boring.”

A dutiful waiter spotted them and brought over a tray of sparkling wine. “Sir? Madame?”

“Thank you.”

He handed Rey a glass as he sipped at his lightly, eyes still on the crowd by the stage.
Rey tapped him on the shoulder. “You need to stop sitting like a cop. What kind of law do you practice, Ben Solo?”

He sat back, crossing his leg towards her. “Corporate law, something he’d never have to deal with. And it makes money. And you, Mrs Dameron-Solo?”

She rolled her eyes. “As if I’d hyphenate my name. Immigration law and I hate it.”

He smiled at her and clinked her glass to hers. “To the non-hyphenated Dameron Solo family.”

She also started watching the crowd, spotting the candidate. He was starting to move away from the crowd, scanning the room. Taking a drink, she whispered to Kylo.

“Do we have children?”

“Two. A four-year-old boy and a two-year-old girl. We’re very concerned about the lack of action on the case by the DA and the police department,” he nodded at her, turning to smile. “You look good for having two kids.”

She noticed Kenobi approaching and didn’t have to force the laugh at his joke.

“Well, well, you’re early,” the man in his late 60s stood and smiled at them. “Hello, Dr Ben Kenobi.”

They both stood to shake his hand. “Ben Solo, and this is my wife, Poe.”

“Ah, Solo, I recognize that name. Your father was a police officer, right? Died very tragically,” Kenobi took his hand.

He nodded as he moved to take Rey’s. He was taking a chance with the name. Recognition had two possible outcomes and he hoping for the positive one.

“Yes, sir. It was a long time ago.”

Kenobi turned back to him. “Well, I’m glad to have your support.”

“Very nice to meet you, sir,” Rey said, smiling.

“Ah, a fellow Brit,” he turned back to her. “I’m from just north of London. It’s nice not to say that I’m from London.”

Her smile tightened. “I grew up in the West Midlands. But I’ve been here since I was a teenager. What brought you to America, sir? I don’t think I’ve read it in any interviews.”

His smile broadened. “Oh, well, I don’t normally talk about it. It was mostly for work. I was always back and forth between New York and London when I was younger, for other things. Then, I made the permanent move. There was quite a lot to do with law in New York after 9/11. But Poe, that’s a lovely name.”

“It’s short for Pollyanna,” Rey laughed. “I don’t quite like it.”

“I think both are lovely,” he studied them both. “I appreciate your support tonight. The city and the system need to change. Palpatine has really set us on the wrong path these last years.”

Kylo nodded. “That’s our main concern. We were late booking, since my wife was out of town for work, but we were glad to get plates.”
“Well, that’s just excellent. If you excuse me, I need to talk to the event planner. She looks like she has her hands full. Ben, I will be back, I promise you, to talk more about your father,” Kenobi tapped on the table, as if to seal his guarantee.

“So his name is also Ben,” Rey said in a low voice, casually taking a drink when Kenobi was out of earshot. “Didn’t you know that before we got here?”

“Of course I did,” he nodded. “My father was a hero cop and my mother has political pull. I never use my name in my real life. It should be worth something here, tonight.”

“And here I’m stuck with a forensic tech’s name and his maxed out credit card,” she leaned back in her chair and fake sighed.

He leaned forward to kiss her jawline. “You did really well there. I’d love to go undercover with you for real.”

“If they let me keep the job, then I hope we will,” she took another drink. “Wait, Kylo, isn’t the killer looking for a Ben? If Kenobi is the killer, he’ll know…”

“It’s not Kenobi, I don’t think,” he shook his head. “He didn’t look like the man at the courthouse. But if he’s after him too, then he’ll probably get his hands on that list. And then we’ll hopefully draw him out. He wouldn’t send goons to an event like this.”

More well-dressed people were arriving and Kenobi was making himself seen, falling easily into the political aspect of being the DA. Kenobi was too short to be their killer, anyway. He was shorter than Kylo was and his hair was short and relatively straight. The image of their killer was taller with slightly longer hair. There were a few curls there as well. What he wanted to know was if this was some political game that the killer was playing.

Their glasses were empty and quickly replaced by two more.

“Well, our forensics friend might as well get his money’s worth,” he clinked their glasses together again.

She smiled and took another small drink. “This is going to be a long night, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” he sighed, reaching to take her hand. “But you look beautiful and I’m so glad to be here with you.”

She let him lift her hand to his lips to kiss it and she tilted her head. “Why couldn’t you be like this yesterday? Or all the days before?”

He frowned, “I…I was angry. For so long.”

He quickly glanced around, still waiting for their table to fill up. They were still relatively alone but he didn’t feel like having this conversation at their table.

“Hey, come here, let’s head by the stage,” he gestured with his head. “I…I really want to talk to you about this.”

She took his hand and slung her handbag over her shoulder. They found a relatively private spot, near the wall. She stepped closer, putting one hand on his hip. To everyone else, they were a young, rich, couple having a night away from their kids. He pulled her near him to whisper to her.

“My father died when I was a kid. He was a cop and worked too much, always on duty. I hated him
when he died, and I hated my mother for always being away. No one had time for me. My uncle helped raise me, but he had his demons too. He wanted to be better, but he always argued with my mother. He thought that she was always better off, since she had been adopted and he had to grow up through the system. Their father was a deadbeat and he disappeared when they were born. Their mother died in childbirth. My family tree is missing a few branches and the roots are rotten. Rey, I know your childhood was nothing compared to mine, but I just… I needed work to give me a purpose, a structure. I changed my name because I started to resent my family, especially my father for leaving me. I never thought about how I felt, other than I just wanted to get the bad people and stop them from making more kids like me,” he rested his temple against hers. “I…I never told anyone that before. I never really realized it before.”

She rolled her forehead against his so that they were facing. “I still can’t believe you’re sharing this with me. You trust me with so much and I still… thank you, Kylo. I’m so sorry that you had to feel that way for so long.”

“It didn’t make me a good partner for you,” he said, reaching up to brush her cheek. “I never should have done that to you.”

She pulled him in to hug him. “Just be like this from now on, and we’ll be okay.”

He held her there in the gradually filling ballroom, balancing their glasses over one another’s shoulders. When she pulled away, he kissed her. She leaned up into it, sighing.

“Ah, young love.”

The unique tone of Kenobi’s voice drifted to his ears. Rey quickly stepped away, embarrassed. Kylo looked from her to the other man and took a quick drink.

“It’s a night away from work and the kids,” he tried to smile. “We don’t get many of those.”

“Ah,” Kenobi said with a small grin. He met Kylo’s gaze and the grey eyes seemed to be challenging him. “Do you feel safe leaving your children with care in a city under such pressure?”

Here we go, Kylo thought. “What do you mean?”

“You’ve been following the news, and you’re here. Clearly you’re not supporting Palpatine’s actions regarding the monster hunting our children,” Kenobi’s tone was soft but also prodding.

“There’s not much action he can do if the police aren’t doing anything,” Rey mumbled, finishing her glass and looking offended.

“Yes, exactly, my dear,” he turned and smiled at her. “The DA has a lot of power and his influence over the police here has clearly waned. Otherwise, we would have this mad man.”

Rey moved closer, to stand by Kylo. “I think that we support your platform sir, because we know that when this man is caught, he will be prosecuted fairly, but also justly for all of the lives that he’s taken.”

“You are something special, Polly,” again, Kenobi turned to meet Kylo’s eyes. “Ben, your table is looking fairly empty. Two of my guests have taken ill. Join me at the head table?”

Trap, trap, trap. The tone of his voice and the invitation screamed not to go ahead, but instead he leaned forward to shake the man’s hand.

“We’d love it, sir.”
The man turned and offered his arm to Rey. “If your husband doesn’t mind?”

“He shouldn’t,” she smiled, turning to talk to the older man. “How long ago were your home?”

And so, Ben Kenobi led Rey to his table, at the centre of the room. They quietly chatted, talking about British things that he mostly tuned out. Kylo followed, downing the last of his champagne and resisted the urge to throw the empty glass at the back of the man’s head. He was smiling and confident, and held himself a good distance from actually touching Rey. This could just be an act, but Kylo really didn’t know how to assess the situation. After seating Rey, he turned to shake Kylo’s hand again

“Welcome, Ben. This night will go quickly, but I hope we have time to chat.”

“I hope so too.”

Kenobi moved to his spot in the middle of the round table as Kylo sat down. It took every ounce of him not to glare angrily at the man, but instead settled for taking Rey’s hand, leaning over to whisper in her ear. “Kill me now.”

“As long as you kill me first.”

The houselights dimmed and he instantly moved closer to Rey: time for the show to start.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we welcome you to this wonderful evening to support our candidate for Distract Attorney, Dr Ben Kenobi,” a young, enthusiastic man boomed from the still-lit stage. “Tonight, we’re going to finish our push before the election and the primaries. We have a long road ahead and with your support, we think that we can make a difference in the District Attorney’s office.”

There was applause from the crowd and Kylo leaned over to whisper to Rey. “In other words, his campaign is struggling.”

“Shh,” she batted at him.

The emcee continued, running down the courses, the wine list, and the speakers for the night. Kylo tuned him out and instead turned to study the faces at this table. There was a man he recognized as a state senator and his wife. The other pair looked to be either a politician or a lawyer and his second wife or mistress, given her age. The final pair of seats were still empty. It was strange that Kenobi had to basically give away the seats at his table.

The woman next to Rey noticed him studying the empty seats and tapped her arm lightly. “They’re running late, don’t worry.”

Rey smiled politely as the emcee finished, presenting herself to the woman. “Hi, we haven’t been introduced. I’m Poe and this is my husband Ben.”

“He’s Han Solo’s son, if you remember,” Kenobi piped up. “And really, Polly is such a better nickname.”

Rey smiled tightly at him. “I really prefer Poe, but if you insist. It’s your party, sir.”

He laughed and seemed to remember his manners. “Now that the first of the talking is done, can I properly introduce my two new friends; Pollyanna Dameron and Ben Solo.”

The woman beside Rey smiled at her again. “Well, welcome to the adult’s table. Mr and Mrs
Tarkin. My husband is in the state senate. I’m sure you’ve heard of him. He put forth that motion… what was it again, dear?”

Her husband, a tight-faced and seemingly humourless man frowned. “It was for highway clean-up. It did not pass. The media still call me Trash Man. Don’t bring that up again.”

The table lightly laughed and Rey looked at Kylo with panic in her eyes, but he smiled and nudged her to do the same.

“Well, we supported it. I don’t see the need for ridicule for something like that,” she reached for her water and Kylo copied her motions. Clearly, the pressure was on her. Kylo didn’t understand why.

The pair next to Kenobi nodded their greetings. “Judge Galen Erso. And this is Tanya.”

Rey waved a small greeting and Kylo nodded in their direction. Rey looked at him again with gritted teeth, and reached for her bag, searching for her phone. Kylo eyed the gun, tucked in the bottom. It could only be seen if one looked for it, but knowing that she had it reminded him of why they were there. She checked it and flashed it in his direction. A text from Dameron.

“I’m sorry, it’s our babysitter. Our son wants to say goodnight, can you excuse us?” She stood from the table, heading to a corner near the table, but not far enough from earshot. Their previous space was now occupied by servers, preparing to take out the trays. Kylo followed, keeping close to her.

“Are you okay?” he whispered.

“Why are they looking at me like they want to eat me?” She whispered. “How have you done this before?”

“I just did.”

She frowned, her voice hushed. “We need to call him, what if someone listens?”

“Text him first and say what’s happening.”

She shook her head. “I’m losing my mind.”

She quickly texted and then waited a few seconds. He still felt eyes on them and then was thankful to see her move to dial.

“Hi sweetie, it’s mum and dad,” Rey started. “Are you having trouble sleeping?”

Rey looked at Kylo and rolled her eyes at Poe’s response.

“Yeah, okay. Just…just try to sleep, okay? We’ll be home soon.”

Again she paused and sighed. “You want to talk to dad? Okay.”

He took her phone and heard Poe’s laughter.

He gritted his teeth and turned so no one could see his reaction. “Did you read your story tonight?”

“Oh yeah, I read sooo many stories, papa. You wouldn’t believe. Look, I just wanted to let you guys know that we have a partial on the notepad. Rose was careful so we don’t think it’s hers. We’re running it now, but we might not get a match tonight,” Poe again sounded like he was eating something. “The map is another story. It’s an older map, something from the 80s. That might be
“Well, we’ll read that story tomorrow then,” he gently replied.

“Mmhmm, sure, look you guys have fun. Um, don’t die. I’m going to go to sleep for a while. Good night, dad. Send my love to mum,” then he hung up.

“Goodnight, love you too.”

He handed the phone to Rey and turned back towards the table.

“Trouble at home?” Mrs Tarkin asked as they took their seats. The wine had already been served and the first course was being spread around.

Rey shook her head. “He doesn’t like us being away, that’s all.”

“How old is he?” Kenobi asked. “If I may ask.”

“He just turned four. I think it gets easier with children when they can talk. At least now, we know what he’s mad about,” she raised her glass. “To our next DA, Ben Kenobi.”

“Hear, hear,” the judge beside Kenobi said, a little too forcefully.

Rey had carefully shifted the conversation away from their fictional family and the two men sitting beside Kenobi started talking politics. Kylo felt Rey relax and took her hand now that she was out of the firing line.

During the first serving, a rather dull fish course for the price that they’d paid, they kept polite conversation about school and work. They knew enough about law to fake their way to a certain point. They mostly turned the talk to the children and the case, casting glances at Kenobi and his very focused conversation. The other two seats were still empty by the time that the plates were being cleared.

“So, if they don’t show, do we get their wine?” Kylo joked.

Mrs Tarkin laughed. “Well, split it with us girls here and you have a deal!”

Kylo grabbed the two glasses and divided it between the three of them. He noticed Rey was carefully spitting every other drink into her bottle of sparkling water. This night would be long and they needed information from these people. He still finished the white wine, but made a decision not to do the same with the next course.

“What charities are you working with, Mrs Tarkin?” Rey asked. She could play this game well, although she was still nervous, he thought as he smiled at her.

He could feel Kenobi’s eyes on him throughout the night. He gave a speech during the pause between the first course and the main. Kylo tried to look engaged but felt more and more annoyed at the promises he was making. The police had holes that needed to be filled, but what could the DA do about that? They sent them a great deal of good cases that could easily be tried to conviction. And Palpatine was decent, but this man was promising the moon. Maybe he did need that red wine after all. The speech wrapped up and the tables were being prepared for the next course. Their table was again occupied by the talk of the three powerful men opposite him.

Rey tapped him on the leg, and leaned over to whisper. “I need to go to the washroom. And so do you.”
He nodded. “Excuse us.”

She took his hand, guiding him between the tables. Out in the hallway, she took a deep breath.

“These people are sharks,” she hissed.

He nodded. “I know.”

The event coordinator was across the hall and noticed them then. She walked up. “Can I help you? Oh, it’s you Ben.”

“Hi,” he said. “Can you tell us where the washrooms are?”

She nodded. “One floor up. I can show you if you need help.”

Rey’s eyes got wide. “No, thank you. My husband and I can find them ourselves.”

She grabbed his hand and started towards the stairway. He almost laughed at her reaction but she shot him a look.

“You are jealous,” he whispered in the stairwell.

“Kylo, this has been the weirdest day of my life. I don’t need girls hitting on my fake husband.”

He would have laughed out loud if she didn’t sound so serious.

The third floor was another small ballroom and two washroom doors. They were alone and she pulled him into the darkened upstairs room, pushing through the swinging doors.

“What are we getting from this? Besides drunk.” She pushed him against the wall, into a corner.

“We’re getting closer to Kenobi,” he tried to soothe her. “Look, I didn’t know they’d go after you like this. But you’re doing so well. Rey, please, let’s go back down and keep this up. We can make it to coffee and cognac and get him alone. Ask him about any threats. Please.”

She was practically shaking when she looked at him again. “I don’t know how much more I can take it. I…I thought I was ready for this promotion and all of the things it would mean but this…this is too much.”

He quickly pulled her into a hug. “Rey, it’s okay. This is not a normal case. And this is not a normal day.”

She sagged against him. “Yesterday, Kylo, I was just about to give up on working with you. I was so close. And now…now I can’t imagine being with anyone but you. How did you do this? How are you like this?”

“I told you, Rey, I know you now. I know what I was missing,” he gently tilted his head. “And I fell in love with you.”

She reached up to kiss him, desperately grabbing to pull him closer. He returned the kiss; her mouth tasted faintly like wine. She was still shaking, reaching for his hips and his thighs. She ran her hands up the front of his pants and he shuddered. Her touches and escaping the tension from the room downstairs went straight to his cock. Now was a very bad time, but every other time had been a bad time too.

“Kylo, it’s nearly eight,” she met his eyes in the low light, filtering in from the street. “If I’m going
to die tonight, I need something from you. Hell, if I’m going to live through the rest of this dinner, I need something from you.”

“Anything for you,” he bent down to kiss her again and felt her undo the button and zipper to his pants, guiding them backwards until she met a sturdy surface.

Her eyes looked near tears as she pulled away. He could only nod and kiss the corners of her eyes. She blinked and then licked her lips. Kissing her again was still frantic and hard, feeling her bite his lip. She boosted herself up onto the table, lifting her dress and sliding down her underwear in one swift motion. Rey reached for his pants again and he helped her remove them. Her shoes and panties fell to the floor and she looked from his erection back to his eyes.

“It’s been so long since someone wanted me,” she whispered, sadness filling her tones.

“I want you,” he moved forward, helping her legs to settle around his back. “I…can I?”

“Yes, now.”

He reached down and felt for her clit, rubbing the delicate nub slowly, knowing that none of this would feel good if she wasn’t ready. His fingers brushed against her soft folds and took in her warmth again, wanting to move faster but needing her to take the lead. She hissed, reaching for his cock and he shifted his hand. Her breath was quickening as he slipped a finger into her wetness, feeling the gentle suction drawing him in. God, why did every time have to be the first time?

“Ready?”

“Yes,” she hissed.

He entered her in one motion and she gasped, gripping her legs around him. His cock was instantly incased in her tight heat and he began to thrust as quickly as he could, while also trying to be gentle. It was painful to hold back, but delicious to hear her sounds. He carefully placed a hand over her mouth, stopping the low moans that she was making. She kissed his palm and licked at his fingers as he fucked her in the darkened room. He moved his hand and grabbed her ass, pulling her closer, lifting her off the table. She gasped at the feeling, rolling her hips against him as he hit a better angle, filling her. She kissed his neck then bit him, hard, making him shudder.

Setting her down again hard, he didn’t care that the table rattled. Instead, he focused on finding that soft spot inside her that he knew would make her forget all of this and make her come. His thrusts quickened, needing to hear her moan and the feeling of her sex tightening around him. In the silence of the room, every sound was amplified. He could hear himself slipping in and out of her and it drove him on, building on his heat. She was panting, nipping at his ear, moving away from his neck.

Rey softly sighed, throwing her head back. He knew that she was close, but he couldn’t go on for much longer. She was just too perfect in this position.

“Rey, I’m…”

“Yes.” She gripped his back. “Yes, Kylo, yes.”

He came and she bit his neck again, digging her hands into his hair. Blinking, he slowly was back in the moment. His hands on her bare thighs, her hands behind his head. The darkened hotel ballroom. They slightly smelt of sex. His orgasm fading, he looked up and gently kissed her again.

“Was that okay?”
“Kylo, that was great,” she wiggled slightly against him, feeling him start to soften within her. “You…do you really love me?”

“Yes, Rey, all of you,” he shook his head. “There’s so much that I still don’t know, but I don’t know how much further I can go with you not remembering. It’s not fair. I know your body, I know your past. You just know the jerk from yesterday.”

She tightened her legs again. “As long as you love me, in some way, every day, none of this will be unfair. I…I’ve been angry too. In the past. When I was raped, when it seemed like everyone hated me as a child. But I always knew that there was something bigger out there for me. I didn’t let that anger at the world make me a hard person.”

“And that’s why I love you,” he whispered. “And that’s why I need you.”

She leaned her head on his shoulder and he felt tears warm his jacket. “I hate how you’ll have to wake up tomorrow and have this conversation again.”

“I’ll do it, every day, until the end of time, if I have to.”

They stood there for a few more moments before he gently pulled out of her and reached for his pants. She half pulled up her underwear before peaking out into the hallway. No one was there and they made their mutual dashes for the washrooms.

He hated the minutes that he was away from her, carefully washing up and splashing water on his face. He was afraid of the mystery couple who still hadn’t shown at their table, and the time that they had spent away. Looking at himself in the mirror, he could have sworn that there was a black shadow over his shoulder. But when he turned, there was no one there. But somewhere, in his mind, he heard the rolling of waves.

She was waiting for him outside the washroom, looking flushed and slightly guilty. She reached up to fix his tie.

“I guess we’ll just say that our daughter needed tucking in?” She asked.

“Or that we were having sex,” he pointed to his neck. “You don’t have makeup, do you?”

“Kylo, I just have my gun,” she frowned. “But that girl downstairs might be able to help.”

They came back down, hand in hand. The event coordinator saw them and quickly waved them off.

“It’s another speech you can’t go in and oh my god,” the young woman’s mouth gaped. “Is that a bite mark?”

He flushed, deeply. “Can you help us out…?”

“Ahsoka,” she pointed at her nametag. “Oh, wow, I can’t wait to be married. Come on.”

She waved them over to a small alcove and pulled a compact from her pocket and carefully touched up Kylo’s neck. She looked at Rey with apologetic eyes.

“I’m so sorry, Mrs Solo. I…I might have been inappropriate earlier.”

“It’s okay, Ahsoka,” Rey leaned against the wall. “But we’d sort of like to know who should be sitting at our table tonight. Dr Kenobi sort of moved us to sit with him and, I don’t know if you’ve
spoken to Mrs Tarkin and Tanya, but I’m really looking for more varied conversation.”

She smiled, smearing a bit of cover-up onto Kylo with her finger. “Well, that shouldn’t look so obvious. And sure, they aren’t really that interesting of people. I actually can’t believe he showed up with Tanya. But, I can check for you.”

They followed her back to her little table by the door. She scanned through her list. “It looks like a Mr Skywalker, plus guest. They still haven’t arrived yet.”

“Skywalker?” Kylo repeated.

“Yeah,” she shrugged. “Plus guest. We didn’t get another name.”

He looked at Rey with wide eyes. She looked confused, but he quickly shook his head. The explanation could wait.

“Thanks for your help again Ahsoka.” Kylo murmured. “Can we go in now?”

She poked her head through the door and nodded, holding it open for them.

He was stalking towards the table when Rey grabbed his arm, forcing him to temper his pace.

“Who is Skywalker?”

He tried to control his breathing, and slowed down. “It’s my mother’s paternal last name. My uncle still uses it. It…anyone here who has that name is related to us.”

She blinked, looking around the expanse of the ballroom. “So…so you’re saying that…”

“I might be related to the killer.”

“That might explain why he’s after you.” She shook her head. “But we don’t know if those seats were reserved for him.”

“Who else would they be for?” He answered, more exhausted and confused than angry.

She looked up at him with mild hurt in her eyes and he took her hand, trying to undo the slight pain he’d caused her.

“So what do we do now?”

He looked back to their table. “We either leave and try again tomorrow. Or we wait until he arrives.”

She nodded. “Then let’s wait him out.”

They returned to see that their table had already eaten, while their plates were untouched.

“Well, that took a while,” Mrs Tarkin winked.

“Everything okay at home?” Kenobi asked, acting like he was actually concerned.

Kylo shook his head. “Jacob is feeling sick, so we might have to leave early.”

“That would be a shame,” Kenobi leaned forward. “We were just discussing how useless the death penalty is as a deterrent to violent crime and the judge was disagreeing with me.”
They ate quickly, glad for the excuse not to argue the point. Time was ticking away and the seats still sat empty. No wine or food this time. Maybe they wouldn’t show?

Another speech, this time from Judge Erso, after the second course was cleared away. Rey was lightly holding his hand, staring at her half empty glass of wine.

“Are you okay, dear?” Mrs Tarkin asked in a whisper, under the booming voice of the judge.

“Oh, I was just worried about our son. I can’t imagine what the parents of those other children are going through,” she smiled, tightly, and then sipped at her wine.

Kylo nodded. “Everyone at our pre-school is afraid.”

Kenobi was listening in, clearly shooting them looks whenever the subject was brought up. Tarkin was talking to him about something else but he eventually excused himself to slip into the seat next to Kylo.

“I couldn’t help overhearing,” he said, sitting down beside him. “Were you discussing the horrible situation with the children again?”

Kylo turned and nodded, leaving Rey to Mrs Tarkin’s slowly deteriorating drunken nonsense. The waiters came around to refill their glasses and Rey gently put her hand over hers. But Kylo accepted, mainly because Kenobi did.

“We’ve been following it on the news, but it’s been hard to know everything,” he turned fully to face him. “We’re always busy with work.”

Kenobi sat back, crossing his legs. “Don’t I know it.”

Kylo took his chance. “Your doctorate, is it in law?”

The other man took a drink of wine and shook his head. “Oh, no, in my previous life, I was an actual doctor. I mainly worked with cancer patients, small children with no hope and rare diseases, and I still have some research on the go. Technically, I’m still practicing. It’s a nightmare to get those things sorted internationally. The law degree came later, but that takes up most of my time now.”

“Really?” He sipped at his wine, matching the man’s pose.

“Well, I’m going to be the next DA,” Kenobi grinned, broadly. “That takes some effort.”

He laughed, trying not to let it sound forced. “Sorry, it slipped my mind.”

“Well, it can be easy to forget.”

“Especially with everyone giving speeches about how you’ll change the world,” he took the chance to reach out to the man’s ego.

Kenobi leaned forward, swirling his glass. “I try not to let it get to my head. I’m not a young man anymore. I have many ideals. But most of this is just talk. I really think that Palpatine has let the office get out of control. I’ve read about some of his ADA’s and other associates and it’s getting to a point of corruption. Have you read his record with the disciplinary board?”

He nodded, faking it. “Not thoroughly, it’s not really my field. But the things I read…I wish I could have time to find out more. It’s been a lot this fall. Pre-school…we were sick the first week when
he started.”

Kenobi smiled again. “I never had children, but I remember meeting your father just when you must have been born. He seemed overwhelmed by it all. Your mother was lovely then. It was a shame to lose your father like we did.”

Kylo tried not to react but must have flinched.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to strike a nerve,” Kenobi actually looked like he felt sorry for him.

“It’s…it’s been a long time,” Kylo tried to shrug it off.

“I really only knew him in passing, really; I was just getting into law at the time, off and on. I was starting to think of it as a night career,” he sat back, looking at the crowd of people, still enjoying the wine.

Kylo glanced over his shoulder to check on Rey, but also to scan the room.

“If you don’t mind me asking, but where are the other two people who should be sitting here?”

Kenobi sat up straighter, looking at his glass. “It was strange. A man called, very insistent that he sit at my table tonight. He didn’t…it was…I don’t know how to explain it. I just felt like I had had that conversation before. The fact that he called the office directly and asked to talk to me just turned things in an even odder direction. But he offered a more than generous campaign donation. What am I to say to that?”

Kylo stilled his face. “Are you sure you’ve never spoken to him before?”

Kenobi turned his grey eyes towards him again. “I…well, that’s a bit of an odd question.”

He met the intense eyes of the man sitting across from him and realized the tone he was using. He desperately hoped that the man would read it as a lawyer’s voice, but it was hard not to lapse into his usual line of questioning.

“I…I was just curious. First inviting us to sit here and then…two more empty seats?” He shrugged, sitting back again. “Might be one of Palpatine’s supporters.”

Kenobi smirked. “Ah, now I see what you’re getting at. It’s been a hard campaign and I appreciate your concern. But I think that I can read people fairly well.”

“I’m sure of that,” he raised his glass and Kenobi met his with a clink.

“So, I’m sure that this Skywalker fellow was genuine. I…I don’t so much care that he was a no show. He still paid the contribution,” Kenobi sat back again, relaxing.

“Well, that’s what matters.”

He noticed that he was eyeing Rey again and met his gaze with a questioning eye.

“Your wife is lovely,” he said, lowly. “Where did you meet?”

How to spin this lie, Kylo thought. “In undergrad, at NYU. It was a nightmare English lit course. I don’t really remember anything except for getting her number.”

He smiled. “Again, Ben, I’m glad you could come. I need to go show my face to these people. I know you have the children at home, so I’ll say my goodnights now.”
They shook hands and he moved to whisper something to Rey and shook her hand before he moved towards the rest of the tables.

Rey smiled lightly at Mrs Tarkin before turning to him with wide eyes.

“We need to go. Now.”

“What. Why?”

“He knows that we’re cops. We need to leave. Now.”

He nodded, following after her directly. They brushed passed Kenobi who offered them a light wave. His hand was on Rey’s back as they moved through the tables. It was nearly 10.30 p.m. There wasn’t much time left in the day.

“What did he say to you?” He asked her when they burst through the doors. Ahsoka, still standing at her post, hopped back in surprise.

She shook her head. “I…Kylo, he just said that he knew who we were. And that he wouldn’t show if we were there. What does that mean?”

“Hey, are you guys okay?” The young woman asked, her lipstick faded after the long night.

He took a few deep breaths. “Ahsoka, is there anywhere here where we can go that’s safe? We think…we think there’s been a threat against Dr Kenobi.”

Her eyes went wide. “I…the security is downstairs. He’s supposed to leave soon. I…I wow.”

Rey was clenching her handbag, looking at anyone passing through the hallway.

He stood up to his full height. How dare Kenobi threaten her? How dare he pretend to play along and then threaten her? “Ahsoka, I think that it’s a very, very good idea that you shut down the event.”

She looked at him in a panic. “Yes, yeah. Oh my god. I can do that.”

She took off down the stairs and he pointed at Rey to head up to the next floor. She nodded and they moved up the stairs before the alarm went off. If he was going to destroy their evening, he was going to ruin his.

Perched around the corner, glancing over to see the people starting to flee the ballroom, they took out their weapons. He really wanted her to be behind him, but instead stood side by side again. The rich and entitled crowd left with their wineglasses still in hand, complaining about their evening being interrupted. He was waiting for Kenobi to leave but suspected he would be out last and that’s what he wanted.

“Kylo, calm down.” She hissed. “You’re crowding me.”

“Sorry,” he mumbled, over the alarm. “He just…makes me itch.”

“I know.”

The stream of people started to slow. The last person to emerge was a rather red-faced Kenobi, obstinately yelling at Ahsoka, who had returned to her spot. She looked belittled and ashamed. He nudged Rey’s shoulder. Now.
“Dr Kenobi,” He said, striding down the stairs with his weapon pointed at the man. “I have some questions.”

Ahsoka looked at him with shocked eyes and backed away. Rey was beside him. Kenobi also looked taken aback and slowly moved into the ballroom again.

Inside the darkened space, through the swinging door, he took a few more steps with his arms raised.

“I know that you were cops the second I spotted you,” he said, lowering his hands. “Why were you here?”

Rey steadied herself beside him. “We are looking for the man that’s murdering the children. Tell us, right now, who was supposed to be at your table tonight!”

They had very little time before the security guards would burst in. Kenobi was taking as long as he could to answer.

“He was a man who offered me a lot of money to run against Palpatine,” he answered and it seemed genuine, but who knew at this point. “He’s been pressing me harder and harder the last two weeks. Now please, lower your weapons. I’m…I don’t know who he is. Something Skywalker.”

The air stilled and Rey quickly withdrew her weapon, sticking it back in her bag. Kylo followed, tucking it back under his jacket.

The security guards burst into the room and they stood there, feet apart.

A large man nudged Kylo. “What’s happening here?”

“He hit on my wife,” he said, plainly. “I was about to punch him in the face.”

Another guard rolled his eyes. “So this is some of this bullshit? Are they drunk?”

“Yes,” Kenobi called. “But…but we’re okay now. I…I apologize, Mr Solo.”

He pulled Rey closer to him. “Do you accept that?”

“Yes,” Rey said, looking softly at the security guards. “We may have had too much to drink.”

“Fucking looks like it,” the second man looked her up and down. “Go home. We have to deal with the yuppies downstairs. This is bullshit.”

As soon as they were in, they left. Kenobi still looked at them with mild panic.

“Are you sure you don’t know who he is?” Kylo asked. “Why did you say that to her? That he wouldn’t show if we were here?”

“I swear,” he waved his hands. “I…I honestly. I don’t know who you are, except that you are cops and you’re after something. Those were clearly not your real names, but he called when he saw the updated guest list! I don’t know how he got it, but he saw the name Ben Solo and said he wasn’t coming. But I know him just the same: a voice on the phone. I’ve never met the man.”

He turned, grabbing Rey by the arm. They left the room without another word, passing by a still-shocked Ahsoka and strode down the stairs to join the waiting crowd.

“What just happened?” Rey said through clenched teeth. “We just threatened the man and he let us
“…I need to figure this out, I think he's lying,” he checked his watch. It was almost 11. Shit. He pulled her to the side in the lobby. Everyone else was milling about, annoyed at the early end to their evening. There were too many people and he had already changed this evening by being there. This hadn’t happened before. He needed to hear how this night would go if he wasn’t here.

“We can’t go out there,” he breathed heavily.

“What if they go after him?” she asked, glancing up the stairs.

He felt exhausted, not remembering which loose ends they had tied up that day. Did they have the others? He was losing control of which day it was when his eyes caught the approaching glare of oncoming headlights. He pulled Rey aside at the last second as the truck crashed into the foyer of the hotel.

The smashing of glass, tile and bodies filled the air, followed by smoke and screaming. The wind was knocked out of him. They were thrown aside, but he held her close as they landed near the front desk. Two black-clad men climbed out of the cab of the truck, looking relatively uninjured. Hiding their faces, he kept her near the ground as the two strangers stalked up the stairs amidst the chaos.

“Rey, they’re looking for us,” he whispered hoarsely in her ear.

She looked around at the carnage of the foyer and was shaking. “Kylo, these people…”

“I know, but we need to go.”

He helped her up and they quickly followed after, guns drawn again. He heard Ahsoka scream, followed by four quick shots and the slamming of the swinging door. Fuck.

The young woman was clutching her shoulder as they rounded the corner. The security guards from before were lying dead on the ground around her. She looked at them with scared eyes, but then turned to look at the door. He nodded and they entered the room, holding the door to keep it from sounding.

The two black figures had Kenobi against the nearest table, shouting something they couldn’t hear.

“Hey!” He shouted. “Are you looking for us?”

Both figures snapped in their direction.

“We know what you’re doing,” Rey yelled. “It needs to stop.”

The taller figure turned to face them while the shorter one — it must be Maul — kept his weapon on Kenobi.

“Girl,” the man said, his voice not disguised. “You know nothing. We gave him the choice. I wanted him to follow the clues. Close but not close enough, I’m afraid. But you’re getting warmer.”

“What do you want with him? With the children?” Kylo kept close to Rey, keeping his ear towards the door. There was always another surprise.

The man lifted his hand to remove his mask, but then stilled. “No, not just yet. Ben Solo, you have
your world. Find me that way. This part is *mine.*”

He reached for something in his pocket and the dim lights of the room suddenly fell black. Kylo grabbed for Rey, holding her close. He felt her breathing heavily against him. The lights flickered again, but they were back in darkness. He started backpedalling, hoping to find the door and the hope of reaching light. He had her. They had to get out.

They stumbled out through the swinging door, blackness around them. Rey was clutching at him. They could see the streetlights and the police lights from downstairs reflecting up into the hall.

He pushed her, trying to get her to run towards the light. They needed to see their attackers. She scrambled to her feet, rushing down the stairs, him at her back.

In the destroyed foyer, they took a few deep breaths. There were police everywhere, and screaming scrambling people.

“Kylo, everything went wrong because we were here,” she said.

“I…I know.”

“We shouldn’t have left him.”

“I know!”

His heart was racing and he couldn’t think. He just needed to keep her safe. He was about to move when he felt a sharp and quick strike to his neck. The blade went through his throat and he gagged, feeling warmth bleed down his shirt. Stunned, in the flashes of the police lights, he saw a black figure move to sharply strike her in the throat and stalk away. Ignoring his own injury, he clutched at her wound, as he felt his knees go out. She reached up blindly for him, turning. The black figure just strode forward, ignoring them and folding into the crowd.

He felt himself fading as she struggled in his arms. She reached up, shaking and grabbing at his throat and tilting her head. The life was bleeding out of them both and he couldn’t stop it.

The last sight he saw was the panic in her eyes as he passed out, trying to keep her from dying.
Day 18

Chapter Summary

Kylo and Rey meet with Kenobi and Palpatine and finally confront the killer. See tags for warnings!

Day 18

He couldn’t breathe when his body shivered and jolted awake. Shaking, Kylo rolled over, gasping, trying to force himself to inhale as it caught at the base of his neck, building a deeper tension that rocked his wary mind. For a few panicked seconds, he didn’t think he’d get through the rest of the morning, let alone the day. He finally coughed, clearing his throat in a moment of pure stubbornness. But the ghost of the knife wound haunted him. He roughly touched his neck. Nothing there. But he could not lie to himself that his hands were shaking more than they had previously. He knelt up, glancing at the clock. 5.37. This was the earliest he had woken up as well.

So close. They had been so close. The man in the ballroom must have been their killer. And he was using his family name.

He had nearly twenty minutes before Finn would arrive. He needed to get a jump on the day. Still massaging his neck, he felt a little lightheaded as he entered the washroom. He reached for Tylenol as he dialled Rey’s number.

“Yeah Niima?”

“Hey, have you started your run yet?”

“Yeah, like fifteen minutes ago. Wait, Kylo how did you know I was…”

“You run every other day,” he swallowed the tablet and took a drink from the faucet. “Look, I need you to get here quickly. I think I know who our killer is and we really need to get ahead of him.”

“What? Really? Sure, just send me the address.”

He quickly texted her, and checked his watch. He wanted her to be there when Finn arrived. This was a chance he’d never had before. Despite how he woke up, he was still riding some of the energy from the previous today. Being undercover, or at least pretending to be, was something different. He had to get to Kenobi earlier today, before the fundraiser. He also had to call Quirin and see if he was taken, and if he had a chance to count. And he needed to call his mother. He couldn’t avoid her forever. It was a bad plan to trust the boy like that, but he couldn’t give him a phone or anything like that.

She must have been closer this time. There was a knock at his door and he checked, thankful it was her. He took her bag and she looked at him in surprise.

“So, what’s going on?”
He brought her inside, quickly closing the door. It was 5.48. They had so much time and it seemed to press on his already tired lungs. He slowly looked at her as she stretched her legs. How early must she get up every day to go through this? He must have thought about this before; how could she always be patient with him when she was so tired?

“Rey, I’m going to tell you something insane. And it has to be quick. In just over ten minutes, your friend Finn is going to show up and leave a note from our killer. I’ve never met him personally before today, but I know he’s your friend. Rey, this is because I’m living the same day, over and over again. It’s been nearly twenty todays,” he met her eyes and she frowned deeply, but he kept going. “Please believe me.”

“I…none of that makes sense. Why would Finn have a note from the killer?”

“He gave him $50. He needs it for the kids in the neighbourhood.”

She closed her eyes and shook her head. “Are you playing a joke on me? Because you hate being partnered with me?”

“No! Never. No Rey, that’s just it. I’ve been awful to you, but all of these todays, I’ve had a chance to get to know you and see what I’ve been missing. You see the things I’ve been missing and you put up with me every day. You’re a great partner and a great and dedicated person,” he reached to pull her in a light hug. She was sweaty and slightly resisted him. “Please, I need you to believe me and help me find the man killing those children.”

She lightly pushed him away, meeting his gaze but. “You sound like all of this is really happening.”

“It is, Rey, it is,” he bent down, surprising her with a kiss, cupping her face with a desperate grip from his quivering hands. She didn’t resist, but didn’t pull away. His eyes were instantly intense again when he looked down at her. “Look, we can do this. Last night, we got so close. Today, we just keep going. That's the plan and I need to follow it.”

He took two small breaths, trying to read her face and only saw tired confusion. He needed her. He was falling deeper into this hole that he couldn't control. He gently took her hand and tried to find something beautiful to say to her. "Look, do you believe that you can fall in love with someone in one day?"

She had briefly closed her eyes, still looking at his mouth. She licked her soft lips, reminding him of her taste, and took a light breath. It cemented him in this today; her breathing and her lips always reminded him that she was always stronger than he could ever be. “I don’t know. I’ve felt alone for so long, I think that I’ve almost stopped believing in love.”

“Believe in it, today. Believe that what I’m saying, what I’m doing, it real. We’re tied together in this. I was so close to giving up in the beginning. I refuse to give up,” he gently kissed her. “Love is the only thing getting me through today.”

“Kylo, this is…what are you saying?”

He checked his watch. “I’ll prove it to you. Okay, my alarm is going to go off and then the radio is going to turn on. And then I need you to open the front door.”

She stared at him in the dull heartbeats that barely broke the silence.

5.59. Alarm.
She looked towards his bedroom, then shot her head back to him. He waited. Click. He mocked the radio as it started. Her eyes went wide as he matched it word for word.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”

He gestured towards the door and she took the few short steps to open it. Both Finn and Rey jumped as they locked eyes. He snorted a light laugh at their reactions.

“Rey what are you…? Do you live here?” Finn clutched the note.

“No, no. It’s his place. He called and told me to come up here. And wait for you. He said…that you would have a note from the killer,” she shook her head. “Finn, did he tell you to do this?”

Finn shook his head. “No, no. I’ve never met him, really. He just walks by the stand all the time. Rey. I’m sorry, some guy gave me $50 to slip this note under his door. I didn’t know he had anything to do with a killer.”

Rey’s eyes had a hint of apprehension as she looked at Kylo. He nodded at her.

“See? No joke,” he checked his watch as the other two stared at him.

“Kylo, this is insane.”

“Just wait,” he said.

“Wait for what?”

He waited another few minutes, absorbing the silence of the apartment. Finally, he shook his head. “A crow is going to hit the balcony window.”

“What, a cro…?”

The bird hitting his window interrupted Rey’s question. Both her and Finn jumped and took a step back from him.

“How did you know that would happen?” She gasped. “Kylo, you’re scaring me.”

“I’m sorry. I’m so sorry, Rey. I…I didn’t mean to,” he shook his head. “You’ve never been here this early. Normally, I call you about now.”

She took a shaky breath, stepping towards him. She looked him up and down and cautiously eyed him. “So, the same day. Over and over again.”

He nodded. “Almost twenty times. Or something.”

“And you say that you think you know who our killer is?” She stepped closer, almost stalking him.

“Yes. He’s either related to me or is using my family name to get closer to me.”

Rey tilted her head. “And for some reason, you just kissed me? And are talking about falling in love in one day.”

Again, he nodded, flushing lightly. It was time to start the day and he was forming a plan. She looked at him intently and he matched her eyes. He was going to stop playing into his game today. He knew where he was supposed to be after 6 p.m., or at least whoever else was supposed to be in
his place.

She reached out and touched his arm. “You’re my partner…and what you just said sounds so unbelievable.” Knowing what she would say next, he started speaking at the same time as her. “But if you think what’s happening has already happened, and it’s for the children, then I need to believe you.”

Finn looked at them with wide eyes and just shook his head.

She kept her eyes locked on him as he accepted her test. Her head then snapped to Finn. “I believe him. You should too.”

“This is the most messed up thing I’ve ever seen,” he shook his head. “How did you know about the crow? How do you know all this?”

“It’s the same day for me. Over and over. Now, can we stop wasting time? We have a schedule to keep,” he said and Rey nodded. Finn shrugged. “Great. Finn, can you go grab five burner phones from the stand? We’ll pay you back.”

“Why?” He asked with caution, although he was moving towards the door.

“We can’t use our phones. He follows them. I think that he’s figured out that we don’t use them anymore, so we’ll keep using the burner phones for now,” he nodded at the man and Finn was shaking his head as he left. He shut the door behind him and he turned to Rey.

“Call Dameron, we need him to come here. I…I have an idea for today. Normally, we call the team in for the note. But I’m not going to do that today,” he looked at her and smiled. She was here early. Things were already in motion. They had a name. He’d call his mother and his uncle and would get to the bottom of this. And then he’d find this Skywalker and the day would be over. “I’m feeling lucky.”

“Oh, really?” She asked, shifting her weight from side to side.

“Yeah,” he stepped forward, placing his hands on her hips, taking a chance. He tried to remember more of how she felt upstairs at the dinner, her legs wrapped around him, than how she looked with her throat cut. He tilted his head to grin at her amused look. “You’re attracted to me.”

She looked at his hands and blushed lightly. “Well, in the beginning. And then you opened your mouth.”

“I’m not that person anymore,” he shook his head. “Look, go get changed. And then we can talk about my plan.”

She stepped back, still eyeing him as she grabbed her bag. She left to change in his bedroom again and if it wasn’t for the fact that Finn would be returning soon, he would have followed after her.

He heard Finn’s knock at the door, but was still careful when he opened it.

“Here are the phones. Where’s Rey?”

“She’s getting changed. Thanks so much, Finn. I really need to depend on you today,” he moved to sit on the sofa and helped him put the SIM cards in. The other man was still looking at him suspiciously. “Even if it’s…not normal what I’m saying.”

“It was just weird seeing her here,” he shook his head.
“I’m sort of dating her,” he shrugged. “Well, however you date someone that forgets you every morning.”

“Are you sure that you’re not insane?” Finn met his eyes. “I mean, all of this is messed up.”

“I know,” he shook his head. “Look, you and I haven’t been able to talk as much as Poe and I. But it seems like you’re a good person. I’m sorry for not being more friendly.”

Finn started programming the other numbers into the phones and gave him a soft look. “It’s…it’s okay. If you really care about Rey, then it’s cool between us. She’s been…I don’t know, sad when she started working with you. Even before the case. We don’t talk all the time, but she needs someone.”

“I know, I feel…shitty about that,” he sat back and stretched his arms behind his head. His neck still dully ached and he had to shake his head. “It’s so strange to wake up and feel like a different person when everyone else just remembers the jerk you were from yesterday.”

“Don’t I know it,” he shrugged. “When I left the neighbourhood and tried to get a better job, it was like I was a stranger when I came back the first few times. Now, I’m working this job and two other ones. It’s rough, but people accept you eventually.”

The door to his bedroom opened and Rey stepped out, dressed and ready for the day. Crisp white blouse and hazelnut hair, drawn up into a ponytail. He'd never get tired of looking at her and taking in how she could transform in an instant. She came over to them, slipping on her work shoes by the door. “Have you called Poe?”

“No, but we need to,” he shifted from the sofa to call from the kitchen. This was his day but he always loved hearing her fall into his tempo.

Poe sounded more breathless then before. It was slightly earlier in the day.

“Hey, yeah, what do you want?”

It was a different response than he was expecting. “It’s Kylo. Poe, has something happened?”

He heard the other man shake his head, muttering something. “No, no. It’s nothing. Arguing with Bebe about something.”

He narrowed his eyes. “Look, I know about your nephew. I know about your sister’s problems. We need to talk. Do you have time to stop by at my place?”

Dameron inhaled slowly. “Okay, I have no idea how you know about all that but…but yeah. Oh god dammit. My assistant just ran out on me, saying she’s sick, so now I’m up to my eyeballs in everything from yesterday and we’re still waiting on the call from today. Fuck it, if you know anything about Elias, then I’m all ears.”

He almost glared at his phone. His assistant hadn’t been sick other days; she'd been there. But she had been gone quite often, he slowly recalled. He hadn't been paying attention to everything. His sudden confidence about the day was slightly shaken.

“Leave your phone there after I send you my address.”

He hung up and turned to the others. “Rey, call your friend Rose. If she isn’t already at work, get her to come here too. If she can’t come, tell her that she has to stop a red-headed man from going into the DA’s office. We’ll come see her later; I have some questions for him and her.”
She nodded, moving out onto the balcony to call her friend. He texted Poe and then watched how she moved. She gently pushed the crow aside and he watched her stand in the sun and the light wind.

“If you had to live one day, over and over again, which day would it be?” He absently asked Finn.

He turned and stood with Kylo, watching Rey on the balcony.

“Probably the last day I had with my aunt. I mean, I don’t think she was my real aunt, but who knows. She was...dying of cancer. They were trying this treatment and it wasn’t doing anything. I was about seventeen or something at the time. She was worried I was going to go into the gang life and, to be honest, that was the easiest thing to do. Working...working wasn’t something you did. But I took her down to the hospital in this beat-up car I had. I remember...I remember the way that she was looking at everyone on the street. We had lunch after the hospital and I didn’t have any money. She gave me $50 and told me that we can’t always take care of ourselves, but we should. I...I don’t know why I stayed with her so long. She was okay, I mean, I thought she was. I took her home and these guys were calling me, trying to get me to come out. But she made me dinner and I stayed. I had to leave, but I didn’t want to. She was sad, sitting in this chair and looking okay. I thought she’d be fine but...she died that night and...I don’t know why. If I had one more day with her, I’d be with her so she wouldn’t die alone,” Finn said, then moved to hand him a phone and turn away.

Kylo watched his back and studied the other man as he finished working on the other phones. “So you’d also choose a hard day?”

He shrugged. “It’s a hard day for someone every day. I still don’t understand all of this, but what’s important about today?”

“Rey dies,” he said, turning back towards the balcony. He forgot how the air tasted in the morning; it was before all of the cars took hold of the city and things still tasted fresh and new. Things could be the same, but tastes and smells were always unique. It was like the light fading from her eyes; every time she died, there was no repetition. It was a dull reminder that he had to carry with him until he could make this madness stop. “She dies, every day, before midnight. I...maybe that’s why I ended up in the loop. She died the first day and it’s been the same since then.”

Rey exited the balcony, the door dully clinking shot, looking between them. The words that had left his mouth hadn't met her ears but he still already pictured her death at the end of the day and it dulled the words that left her mouth. “She can’t come, but she wants to know more about what’s going on.”

“Take a phone and we’ll figure it out,” he gestured, dully trying to shake the ghosts that surrounded her.

He wanted to make tea or coffee or something but resisted the urge. He settled for staring at his furniture. Finn and Rey talked lowly until Poe arrived, looking stressed and annoyed.

Kylo handed him a phone, programmed with their other numbers. “You need to go. Now. Go to Elias. I’m worried about why your assistant is sick. Go and get him and then call us. The numbers are there.”

Dameron nodded, stunned and took the phone. “I have...god dammit, Kylo. What the hell is going on?”

“Just go get him and then call us.”
The other man acknowledged the other two people in the room then turned and left. He hated not informing him about everything, but there was an itching feeling building in the back of his mind.

“Do we go into work now?” Rey asked. “The captain will be mad.”

He shook his head. “Dameron is going to take care of his part, and Finn can take care of the homeless man. We’re going to go talk to the first victim’s family. Why that kid, why did it start there.”

“What about the next drop?” She checked her watch. “It should be happening soon.”

*That* would be a change again. He took a few deep breaths; he had the connections to health care. He knew where the mother worked. He met her eyes and lightly shook his head.

“She’s already gone, but if we find out why the first kid was taken, that might explain why she was also murdered,” he said. “There’s something that connects them; all of the parents we’ve re-interviewed have been in health care, but there has to be more to that.”

Rey slowly nodded, starting to understand his plan. “Why didn’t you talk to them first?”

He shrugged, wincing inwardly. “I hadn’t figured out the pattern connecting the others before.”

He grabbed a notepad from the kitchen and scrawled down an address. He handed it to Finn. “Go to this address and follow the homeless man. If he’s not there, then go to the cathedral downtown, the one across from Rockefeller. He’s got a bomb so try to get him in for…something.”

“I can do that.”

Kylo took a few deep breaths. “We haven’t done this type of day in a while.”

“What do you mean?”

He shook his head. “In…in the beginning, I thought I could catch him when he dropped the girl. And that pissed him off. We need to keep him guessing today.”

He frowned and then made a decision. He went to his bedside table and retrieved his reserve weapon. He handed to Finn with serious eyes. “If you see anyone, or anything happens, use this. I’ll back you up if you get in any trouble. If there’s a tomorrow.”

The younger man took the weapon and nodded, tucking it into his pants. “In that case, I hope there’s no tomorrow.”

Finn left, following his instructions. When they were alone, Rey paced around his apartment, looking at his sparse décor.

“The first child was Nicholas Dyas. It feels like a lifetime ago since we found him,” she mumbled, looking at his saltshaker, sitting on the kitchen table. “You never eat, why do you have this?”

“I eat. And my mother bought it for me,” he sighed, remembering the other steps he had planned out. “I need to call her. Just wait.”

He dialled the number and tried to be less annoyed. He focused on Rey as she nervously cleaned his kitchen as the phone rang.

“Hello?”
“Hi, mom?”

There was a long pause. “Well, look who’s calling. What’s wrong, Ben?”

He sighed. “Mom, this case is somehow connected to the Skywalker family. I have… I have some questions.”

“The murdered children?” his mother sighed. “What did you find out?”

“I was talking to Ben Kenobi and he said that someone giving the name Skywalker was trying to give his campaign money,” he said. “Who could that be?”

“I…I have no idea. Ben Kenobi? I haven’t heard that name in ages. But as for our family, it’s a fairly short list.”

“Well, can you check?” He asked, clenching his fists. “It’s important. Maybe your father? Can you ask Uncle Luke?”

“I’m about to take your uncle to the airport, so I’ll ask him. There’s…” she paused, taking a deep breath. “I don’t think your grandfather has anything to do with this. Are you okay?”

“What are you talking about? Are you sure it couldn’t be him? You don’t know where he is.”

She took another long pause. He held the phone tighter, clenching his other hand into a fist.

“Mom. This is serious.”

“Ben, you should call more often. He’s up here in Albany now. Luke tracked him down a while ago. He’s in no shape to be running around murdering children, Ben,” her tone was serious, but also sad. “Why don’t you call?”

Why did she tell him this before? God dammit.

“Well, just ask Luke,” he shook his head. “You can’t call me at this number. I’ll…I’ll text you the other number.”

“Sure. Let me know if…”

He hung up and reached to text her from the burner phone. Of course she would be obscure and useless. Of course she wouldn’t tell him that they’d found his grandfather. Of course Uncle Luke wouldn’t tell him either. He touched on some of his previous anger with his family and gritted his teeth. He was angrily texting when Rey stilled his hand. Sitting beside him on the couch, she glared at him as she scanned the text.

“Slow down, explain this to me,” she took the phone, checked the number and then deleted a few words from his message and sent it. “Don’t send that to your mom.”

He took a deep breath and then told her about what happened at the Kenobi fundraiser. How he had denied knowing the person who booked at the table, but if his mother knew the name, then there must have been a deeper connection. The part he slowed down at, and slowly reached for her hand, was upstairs in the ballroom.

She entwined their fingers, looking distant. “I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. Or think you do. Or whatever is happening.”

He felt his ears burn. “There’ve been other times.”
She looked up and studied him. “Kylo, if anyone else were saying things like this to me, then I wouldn’t believe them. The way that you’re talking and acting…this can’t be just a dream or something else. But why today? Why’s this important?”

“You die, Rey, every day before midnight. I can’t stay awake past 2 a.m. It might have all started with the first loop. You…you thought you were saving the boy, but it was the wrong boy, or maybe he meant someone else. I still haven’t figured that part out,” he shook his head. “It’s like I said before. Falling in love with you today has been the thing that keeps me going. Yes, the children. Yes, the case. But it’s you. You just…you keep me going. Every morning, when I hear your voice, I know that there will eventually be a tomorrow.”

“With me?”

“Of course with you,” he squeezed her hand. “You’re not alone anymore.”

“Don’t say that if you don’t mean it.”

“I mean every word,” he brought her hand up and kissed it lightly. “Today, every day, forever.”

She stared at him and could only sigh. “How many times have you said all this before? Told me this story?”

“I wish I could remember, but I mean it every time.”

She shook her head. “I had a dream last night. I don’t know if this means anything. We…we were at an aquarium. There was water and blue everywhere. There was this boy with us. He looked so happy. Kylo, when I woke up this morning, I didn’t know what any of that meant. I just thought it was stress because I was angry at you and was worried about the children.”

“You never mentioned a dream before,” he put his hand on her knee.

“Maybe you didn’t ask.”

“I deserve that.”

“Yes, all of it.”

Her eyes locked with his and she licked her lips. They didn’t have time for this, but he still couldn’t stop himself. He leaned forward, taking her face in his hands to kiss her. Her mouth was warm and soft and everything he remembered it to be. She responded now, shifting to turn and spread her legs and pull him closer to her, onto the couch. settling on top of her, he ran his hand up her side, under her suit jacket. He looked down at her and she smiled, and he lost himself in that moment. Her hands were pulling him forward, not stopping him. The call would come at any moment and they had to talk to the Dyas family, but it felt blissful to make out on his couch for the few stolen minutes that they had.

He kissed up her neck and bit at her ear, feeling her beneath him. “You amaze me.”

“Who are you and what have you done with my partner?” She ran her hands through his hair, pulling him up to meet his eyes again.

Trailing down her body, his hands traced the front of her pants. His moved to the zipper. “We…we don’t have time for much more…but can I?”

She bit her lip, but nodded.
He started to move down her body, kissing her clothed breasts. He felt her breathing get heavier, her hands still knotted in his hair.

“God, Kylo, I haven’t showered.”

He shifted on the couch, undoing her pants and pulling them down, with her underwear. He needed to do this for her. There would be too many horrors that morning. She grasped the hand rest of his couch, arching forward. He lightly kissed the start of her lightly haired start of her pubic bone, still fixing her pants. He met her eyes and she nodded; they were on the clock but this could be the only day that they had together.

Her pants were off and tossed aside, after a bit of fussing with her shoes. She laughed lightly as he swore at her shoes. He snapped her eyes to her once they were off and she closed her eyes as his hands returned to her body. He lifted her hips, dipping his head down to her clit, knowing exactly where it was. He licked it lightly at first, feeling her moans before he heard them.

“Kylo, oh. You really…you really have done this before.” She mumbled, shifting a little.

He smirked, bringing a hand up to join his mouth. She wanted him. He’d done it again. He started to rub her rapidly, looking up to meet her eyes, enjoying the sounds she was making. This was all for her.

He shifted, leaning forward, continuing the quick strokes as he kissed her.

“I love you, no matter how strange it sounds.”

She pushed his hand away, pulling him closer. “You’re hard. I can feel it.”

“Yes…I can’t help it.”

“Kylo, please.”

“We might not have time.”

“We’ll…we’ll get there. Please.” She was reaching for his belt and he smirked, helping her. He hadn’t planned on this. She helped him shove his pants and underwear down and he thrust inside her. She was wet, ready and he couldn’t waste time.

“God,” he mumbled into her ear, shifting on top of her. “I’m…I’m sorry this isn’t more romantic.”

“Quiet…just…just make me feel good.”

She put her legs behind him, bringing him closer. He channelled their previous time together. Was this the first time they’d been together two days in a row? He couldn’t remember. He grabbed at her bare leg, focusing his thrusts more on her than on how much quicker he wanted to move. Slow and deep, letting her feel him. It wasn’t fair that this first time was half-clothed on his couch but fuck, it was still happening.

He grasped at her shoulders, pulling her up. Her eyes took a second to focus, but she followed as he sat up. He pulled her onto his lap and entered her again. She moaned, starting to thrust bringing him into her, guiding the tempo of their sex. She moved her pants aside in annoyance, briefly leaving him.

“Miss me?” she smirked, as she guided him into her again.
“Always.”

He kissed her as she moved her hips against his, in steady, deep thrusts. The tightness of her body was always something he wanted, no matter how he knew the day would end. But hell, who knew how this day would end? Making love to her was nothing that he could stop once it started.

She rolled her hips in a certain way and moaned.

“Do you like that?” He reached up to whisper in her ear.

“Yes.”

He shifted slightly and grabbed her hips. She cried out again and he matched her motions. He was close but couldn’t let her leave here without feeling how much he loved her.

She thrust against him again and shuddered. He pulled her close, not letting her get away, as he got himself off. He came and she lowly moaned, letting her head flop against his shoulder.

She was panting slightly, kissing him when their phones started to ring. She reached for hers, not letting him leave her.

“Yes, Niima?”

He heard the captain’s voice on the other end. He touched her hips and let his fingers trail towards where he was still inside her. She lightly glared at him, but kept listening.

“Yes, sir, we’re…sir we have a lead that we’re following. We’ll be at the station as soon as we can.”

She hung up and set her phone aside, turning to face him. “We’re not going to the station, are we?”

“Maybe, if there’s time.” He reached up, taking her head in his hand. “You’re so beautiful, I don’t know how else to say it.”

“You…I…we fit together. I’ve never…I don’t know. But…we need to go.” She sat down against him and hissed, but then shook her head. “Kylo, I don’t know what’s happening, but let’s…let’s go.”

She pulled away and reached for her pants. He pulled up his own and took her hand again. “Look, I…I love you.”

She was doing up her pants and nodded. “I…If I didn’t believe you truly before, then I do now. I…you know my body. I don’t know yours. Kylo, we need to go but…how can you fall in love with someone only after one day?”

“I…I just do.”

She smiled, shifting away. “Then I don’t feel weird.”

They finished redressing and he tried to figure out her words. He hadn’t changed from yesterday but quickly brushed his teeth as she gathered up her things.

“What do we do with our phones?”

He shrugged, mumbling over his toothbrush. “Leave them here, we haven’t called in the team. We leave them here, he might come looking for us and waste time.”
She leaned against the bathroom door. “You know what we’re going to find, right?”

He finished rinsing his mouth. “Yeah. The Windu girl has been long dead, we can’t change that. Her mother…her mother is nice. We…maybe we should go talk to her again once we’re finished at the Dyas’s.”

“How do you know her?” She followed him into his bedroom as he fixed his weapon. He tried to make his hair look normal but heard her sigh. She ran her hands through it before checking his bedroom mirror. “You look fine, now focus.”

He grabbed his suit coat, pulling it on, and tried to shrug. “It was on…one of the days that you died horribly. She was…she’d just lost her daughter and only cared about me. It made no sense.”

Frowning, he started out of the apartment and she followed.

“Where did you meet her?”

“At the hospital. One of the times that you were shot and I…I thought that you would make it. I thought they could stop the bleeding, but I was too late. You died and I had to go through the day alone. I…I like it better when you’re by my side.”

He left the door unlocked again and moved away from his door. She followed after. Their phones were inside. He hoped that would throw him off.

When they reached his elevator, she pulled him closer. “How many times have you seen me die?”

“Almost every day,” he shook his head. “I need to stop it soon.”

“Then that’s what we’ll do.”

The door dinged and he stopped her and quickly whispered to her. “No matter what happens today, I love you. Don’t ever forget it.”

She lightly nodded then turned her head towards the day before them. “Let’s do our jobs.”

Rey remembered the address to the boy’s parents and gave it to their taxi driver. It was still a long list, but there were always distractions throughout the day. He absently rubbed his neck and sighed.

“Are you okay?” She asked.

“Yeah…it just, hurts a little,” he shook his head. “We got our throats cut yesterday.”

She closed her eyes and touched her own throat. “I’m glad I don’t remember.”

The Dyas family also lived in Staten Island and he briefly thought about checking in with Poe. They weren’t that close, but it was still strange to be in this part of the city again. He tried to remember interviewing the family and recalled some of the details. But to him, it was almost a month ago.

“I was rude to them, wasn’t I?” He asked.

Rey shook her head. “You were professional. But you were frustrated with me and the questions that I was asking.”

“Sorry,” he frowned.
“It’s okay.”

After telling the driver to wait, they walked up to the small house. A woman he recognized as Mrs Dyas was working in the front garden, with her back to them. She turned when she heard their footsteps. She stood, wiping her hands on her pants. Bits of dirt lingered on the khaki fabric.

“Hello detectives,” she looked at them lightly, eyes still haunted. “Nice to see you again.”

“Hi, we’re sorry for dropping in on you like this,” Rey shook her hand. “We have some follow-up questions that might help us with the case.”


The house was quiet and neat. He took in the emptiness and felt the coldness of the space and frowned. “Where is your husband?”

She sat down at the kitchen island and closed her eyes.

“He…he took his own life. Last week. Losing Nick…it was too much for him,” she looked at her kitchen, folding her hands on the island. “I’m alone now.”

He looked at Rey and she gently put a hand on the woman’s shoulder. “I’m so, so sorry.”

She sort of shrugged, looking like she had no energy left to give. “What were you going to ask me?”

He cleared his throat. “Was Nick…was he acting strange the day that he was taken?”

Nodding, she sat up a little straighter. “He…he was being difficult. We were having a lot to deal with this month. He had been sick again and we were in and out of the hospital. He has this breathing disorder that we thought had cleared up years ago. But they thought it might have reoccurred. We were booked in to a specialist the day…the day he went away. He refused to go. He said he was tired of going to the hospital. My husband…he finally gave up and called the office. I…was in the garden. That’s when he was taken. I still can’t believe that they’re both gone.”

She hung her head and Kylo wasn’t sure how much more they could press the poor woman.

“Where do you work?” He asked.

“I…I just started a new job, at an office,” she replied. “They’re probably going to fire me now, since I’ve taken so many days off.”

“Where did you work before?”

She lifted her head and answered at him with numbness. “I was an RN.”

Yes, another one. He stilled his face and nodded.

Rey sat down next to her. “Mrs Dyas, we have people through the department that you can talk to. You shouldn’t have to go through this alone.”

She shook her head. “No, I…I think I…I don’t want any help. Every day that I wake up, they’re further away from me. Just breathing makes me feel like I’m forgetting them. I want the world to stop and remember them, but it just keeps going. I’ve seen families lose a loved one and lose all hope. But they somehow move on, and I can’t do that. There’s nothing I can do to bring them back except stop moving forward. I’m all that’s left and I need to keep them alive in my mind. If I try
hard enough, maybe they’ll come back to me again.”

Rey looked from the woman back to Kylo. He could only look at the pained woman with sorrow and feel the same empty emotion. Repeating the same things, every day, he got to hear Rey’s voice. He had another chance. This woman was living in an echo of a memory. He couldn’t ask her for any drawings or other artwork. They should go.

“Thank you for your time, Mrs Dyas,” he said. “But think about asking for help. There’s nothing wrong with moving forward. Their memories should be shared with others, not kept locked up in your head. Share them with the world and they will be remembered.”

She simply nodded and looked away. Rey stood and they quietly left.

“That was…hard,” she finally said when the sat in the quiet taxi. “She…I hope she gets help,” he looked out the window as the house faded out of view. “When we get him, maybe it will give her closure.”

Rey nodded, reaching for his hand. “What now?”

“We go talk to the DA,” he checked his watch. “We need to ask him what he knows about Skywalker and if he’s being threatened, somehow. It still bothers me that we were poisoned there. It doesn’t make sense.”

“And then Kenobi?”

He nodded. “We’ll get him before the benefit. Then we try to stay ahead of him and live through this day and see who shows up in those seats when we’re not there. I think that we should still talk to the Billabas this afternoon. She was the second child taken and we hopefully will learn more from them. Maybe we check in at the lab after that, or just take a break. And then the benefit.”

“That’s…that will be like twelve hours from now,” she shook her head.

He gazed out the window and sighed. “Quirin’s at the park right now. He’s getting taken. He’s going to count for us. We’ll be able to narrow down where they get taken. It can’t be that far away, because he’s able to go back and forth, but it does explain why his accomplices aren’t always on top of things. He wants us to follow the same routines so that they’ll know where we will be. The homeless man didn’t have a phone on him. The assassin, Maul, can’t exactly like being bossed around, no matter how much he’s paying him.”

The rest of the drive was quiet as they headed back into the city. Pulling up to the courthouse, they got a text from Finn. He’s stopped the homeless man and was wondering what he should do next. He told him to go back to the stand and watch for anyone suspicious. He knew that there would be someone watching his apartment at some point.

They greeted Rose, who said that no one strange had been around the courthouse. They left her with a warning that there might be two of them and she nodded, taking her task seriously. Then they went to talk to Palpatine.

“Can I help you?” Holdo called as they walked by her open office door. “Are you looking for the DA?”

Kylo nodded. “Is he here?”

She nodded, her purple hair bobbing. “He’s been asking to see you both about the case. We’ve
been back and forth to the station all morning. It’s making my head spin.”

“Then we’ll see ourselves in,” he turned and opened the other office door without knocking.

Palpatine was standing by the row of clothing, looking through them. He turned and greeted them with a bit of confusion.

“Where have you two been all morning? The others are doing actual police work,” he frowned, moving to sit behind his desk. He drummed his fingers on the surface and Kylo realized he was in for a fight.

Kylo sat down in the vacant chair across from him. Rey studied them both before sitting down beside him. She could clearly feel the tension between the two and pursed her lips in frustration.

“In the top drawer of your desk are a notepad and a map. The notepad matches the paper that the killer has been leaving for me,” he flatly said. “And he’s been threatening you or donating large amounts of money to your campaign to get what he wants. What does he want?”

Palpatine sat up and looked like he was about to shout at them before slowly opening the drawer. He gazed inside and then back up to Kylo.

“Well, aren’t you full of surprises,” he pulled out the two items, tossing them on the desk. “These last two weeks have been very stressful. Constant phone calls and meetings. Feeling like I’m being followed. But I want to know how you know about all of this.”

“Does he use the name Skywalker?”

Palpatine licked his lips. “He’s…he’s used that name. Yes.”

“What does he say?”

Palpatine sighed. “I really don’t like that you know about this, detective.”

“I don’t care what you like or don’t like,” he sat up, glaring at him. “I need you to tell me exactly what’s going on so I can stop him from killing her and the children.”

The other man glowered in return, not backing down. “Well, you seem to know so much. Why don’t you tell me?”

“He’s obviously looking to gain power somehow. Put pressure on you both, whoever wins, he gets the candidate he wants,” he narrowed his eyes. “You would corrupt your own office for what? Money?”

Palpatine slowly stood and turned towards the window. “He made a good case. There are so many things wrong with this world. I’m not going to live forever and control of this office needs to be consistent. Criminals need to be punished, harshly. Every-day people need to be controlled for their own good. Things need to be in place for the future. Your generation…you don’t understand that liberties can be lost. You all take too much for granted. He has a plan for you, Ben Solo. A plan for us all.”

Kylo shook his head and stood. “How did he get to you?”

“You hear the same thing often enough, it eventually sinks in,” he checked his watch. “Would you kindly leave now, I’m expecting a guest.”
Kylo almost smirked. Not if Rose had anything to do about it.

“Let’s go,” he said to Rey. “We won’t get anything else from him.”

He turned and left, glad not to meet anyone in the hallway. They passed by Holdo’s room again and she called out to them.

“Detectives, did you solve your problem?” She looked at them intently as they stepped into the entrance of her office. Similar to Palpatine’s office, he noticed a rack of clothes: pant suits, dresses, gowns, hanging to the side. She looked tired, with piles of papers to sort through. He felt a little sorry for her, having to work with that man everyday. But part of him was nervous being in her office again.

“We’re getting closer,” he said, shortly. “Can you excuse us please?”

They needed to get to Kenobi’s office, although he had a feeling he would hear the same story. They came downstairs to see the red-headed man being led away in handcuffs, yelling obscenities at Rose. Maul must have been to poison them on the other today; he remembered with some satisfaction of shooting that man, Hux, and wished he could do it again. There was always someone looking for them. He was becoming more flexible with where he sent his goons and that meant they wouldn’t always have the jump on them. But one more down, he thought with a small smile. Rose waved at them and rolled her eyes.

“Wow, what a jerk,” she mumbled.

“How did you get him taken away?” Rey asked, watching the doors slam shut behind him.

“He had a concealed weapon and tried to avoid the metal detector. He started making threats,” she shrugged. “This sort of stuff, we need to take seriously. Hi, I’m Rose.”

Kylo shook her hand. “Detective Kylo Ren.”

“Oh, wow, you’re her new partner?”

“Yes,” he nodded. “Thank you for helping us.”

“It’s no problem.”

Kylo checked his watch. Part of him wanted to wait for him at the courthouse, but the other part realised that it was too early in the day for a confrontation. Get to Kenobi, try to convince him not to listen to him. Palpatine seemed to be doing whatever to get under his skin. There was no talking to him.

“Just watch out for another stranger. He’ll be by later on,” he said. “We have to go, but we’ll check in later. Here.”

He handed her the reserved burner phone. “Call us if you see anything.”

She nodded, slipping the phone in her pocket. “Sure.”

Leaving the building, he shook his head. “Controlling the DA’s office seems like part of a larger plan.”

“Do you think it’s some sort of test? Testing to see if he can get something small and then move onto another, more powerful post?” She frowned as they walked down the street, scanning for a
“Start small,” he nodded, although it was an understatement. Had he done this somewhere else before? Small town, maybe? “He must be using the loop to wear them down. If the children are all in the loop, then he must be using them as a way to repeat the days, learn what to say and do and find a way to get to them. And then when he’s finally done with that day, he moves onto the next one.”

“So, it’s possible that the children lived through the loops on other days?”

He took a deep sigh. “We just saw their final day. They must be taken, but he waits to kill him until he gets the day right.”

She nodded. “But he can’t break this loop. He can kill Quirin, but you’re still looping.”

“But I’ve died before in the loop. Why didn’t that break it?”

Rey sighed. “I…you’re right.”

“I don’t like this,” he shook his head. “How does he know where we’re supposed to be?”

She stopped walking, gazing around at all of the people on the street. Strangers, doing normal things they would do any other day. People had routines. Who knows how many times they had unknowingly repeated the same day? Everything had a cycle. Living similar days, one forgets what one had for breakfast a week later. Give it enough time, and it all becomes background noise to the moment. He took a sharp breath and she reached for his hand and she nodded as the thought finally hit them both at the same time.

“We lived through this day before I was in the loop,” he felt his voice tighten at the thought, both excitement and terror settling around him. “He brought me into it. It has been about me from the start. He’s after me.”

“That’s the only explanation!” She jumped slightly. “He must have tried to kill the boy, the Jinn boy, and it didn’t work. That’s how he must have found you. He set this whole thing up.”

“Skywalker,” he mumbled. “We have to find him.”

His phone started to buzz and he frowned at it. Dameron.

“Yeah?”

“Hey, just thought I’d check in,” he said. “Elias is fine.”

“Is your assistant back?”

“Yeah, she was back for a bit, now she’s gone again. I’m going to have to fire her or something. We have too much to do. Anything I can check up for you guys? You know, aside from the actual work I have to do,” he could hear Dameron rustling papers.

“No, no…” he shook his head. “Other than finding the German Assassin, Ulrik Maul. If we figure out where he’s hiding, we isolate him. Start with InterPol. He’s got these tattoos, ugly red and black, all over his face. You’ll know when you look it up.”

“Got it.”

He hung up and looked at Rey. “Let’s go. Kenobi knows more than he’s letting on. We need to go
talk to him. I saw the address to his office yesterday on the benefit webpage.”

He pushed himself to his feet and helped her up. They hailed a cab and started towards the man who could hopefully answer all of this. He slumped down in the cab, letting the realisation that he’d lived through the day before without knowing it wash over him. He moped the entire ride across the city. She gently rubbed his leg, trying to get him to focus.

“This just means you’ve died so many more times, if he was able to get to know the day before this started,” he rested his head on her shoulder. “All those days, thinking that I hated you.”

She kissed his forehead. “But you don’t hate me today. That’s what matters.”

He closed his eyes and frowned. The man using the Skywalker name was manipulating Palpatine and Kenobi, maybe others. He’d found a way to get to them and use them because they heard what they wanted to hear. How was he any different, with what he was doing to Rey? He knew what to say to her, how to touch her. Wasn’t he basically doing the same to get something that he wanted? The thought made him feel deeply guilty. How could he keep doing this to her, tricking her into wanting him?

The cab came to a stop and he followed her out of the car. It was hard to shake the feeling as they approached the main reception of the office building. Rey tried to smile at him and he returned it, lightly. This really wasn’t fair to her. He was falling back down that hole, the beauty of what they shared that morning fading.

“We’re here to see Dr Kenobi,” he said, pulling out his badge. “We have a credible threat against the benefit tonight.”

“Goodness,” the secretary said, bringing her fake nails to her mouth in surprise. “Yes. He’s here. I’ll call up and then you can go discuss it with him.”

He leaned against the desk and closed his eyes. Rey checked her phone as the secretary talked to Kenobi. “No news is good news?”

He nodded. “Yeah.”

“You can go up. Tenth floor,” she pointed, before turning to pick up her purse from the ground to grab her cell phone. She started texting, ignoring them in favour of her phone.

“Thank you.”

In the elevator, he couldn’t look at her. He was at the centre of this and he needed to know why. What could he do? Send her away? It never worked to try to push her away and keep her distant. She would figure it out.

“Kylo, are you okay?”

He shook his head. “Just…this day.”

“Yeah,” she said, lightly grasping his hand. “Be here, with me. We’ll figure it out. Okay?”

He nodded, “I really don’t deserve you.”

“Yes, you do. I annoy you. You deserve that.”

“I…I yelled at you today, the other today. I’m sorry. You were really beautiful that night.”
“It’s okay,” she shook her head. “We’ll get through this.”

The elevator dinged and Kenobi greeted them on the other side.

“I must say, visits from detectives really make me nervous,” he extended his hand as they exited. “Dr Kenobi. But please, call me Ben.”

“Detectives Ren and Niima,” they presented their badges. “We’re here to discuss a threat to the benefit tonight.”

“Please do. Follow me to my office. It’s a bit temporary here. I’m hoping to get something fancier come November,” he nodded with a wink, leading them down the hall.

It was a largely white room, with various bookcases lining the walls. There was little art and the room really did feel temporary. He moved behind his desk, motioning for them to take the chairs across from him.

“I have a fairly full schedule, so you caught me at the right time.”

“Doctor, how do you know Anakin Skywalker?”

He frowned at him, and feigned surprise. Kylo knew it was a lie when the next words left his mouth. “I…I’ve never heard that name before.”

“Yes, you must have,” Kylo glared, remembering the lies he’d told before. “At least the name Skywalker. He’s on your guest list for tonight, correct?”

He glanced at the laptop on his desk, scrolling through a few pages. “Yes. Yes, that name is there.”

“And he’s been calling you, offering you money the last two weeks.”

Kylo’s voice was flat and Kenobi looked at him with narrowed eyes.

“How do you know about that?”

“Sir, he’s been doing the same thing to Sheev Palpatine. We’re thinking that he’s playing both sides, whoever he gets in charge, will follow his direction,” Rey said, trying to cut the tension between them.

Kenobi nodded at her. “That’s…that’s quite a power play. I…to be honest with you, I would have dropped out of the race by now if it wasn’t for this Skywalker fellow.”

“How do you know Leia Organa and Han Solo?” Kylo pressed on, trying to ignore the excuses the man was making.

“Leia and Han? God, that was ages ago. Their son was ill as an infant, but I got to know them long before that. I was working mostly as a young doctor, children with cancer and such, but was thinking about law studies. It was quite random how I met them,” he sat back, shaking his head. “It was like we were destined to meet. My car got a flat tire outside of their house. We got to talking and I discovered he was in law enforcement. We would talk whenever I was in town. Leia, I guess we were somewhat friends, especially after their son was born. How…these are very specific questions.”

“We have a very specific source,” he shook his head. “Now, back to Skywalker.”

“I…I really don’t know that much about him,” he shook his head. “Isn’t her brother’s last name
Skywalker? Luke?"

“Don’t change the subject. Have you met him, the man threatening you?”

“Yes, a couple of times. Mostly over the last few days. He’s been getting more…insistent. I believe he’s looking for someone. The fact that you mentioned the Organa-Solo family leads me to believe that you know who,” he leaned forward, folding his hands on the desk.

“Their son. Ben Solo.”

“Come to think of it, I do know Luke Skywalker quite well. I remember now. He was around quite a bit. Both him and Leia started to look up to me, although I was only ten or so years older than they were,” he shook his head. “That slipped my mind.”

“I’m guessing quite a bit has slipped your mind,” Kylo narrowed his eyes. “You’re lying about something.”

“And so are you, Ben Solo.”

Kylo jumped to his feet. “Tell me what you know! Who’s doing this!”

“Well, that was a lucky guess,” Kenobi also stood. “I don’t know! I told you! This man…he may be using the Skywalker name but I don’t know who he is. I swear!”

Rey grabbed at his hand, standing beside him. “Sir, we need you to be honest with us. He’s murdering these children and threatening my partner. This isn’t a game.”

The other man’s shoulders sagged slightly. “I know, Detective Niima. I…it’s starting to feel like he’s in my head. He always seems to know where I am and what I’m doing. He knows what I’m going to say before I say it. I feel tired after each meeting, every conversation. I don’t understand half of the things he’s asking of me, but I’m worried he’ll…do something if I don’t obey. It…it’s exhausting.”

“We know the feeling,” Rey nodded. “Tonight, sir, we need to know when he arrives.”

“I…” Kenobi looked from her, back to Kylo. “Yes, of course.”

She wrote down her number and slid it to him across the desk. “Call us on this number when he shows up.”

Kylo turned without saying goodbye. Rey followed after him and he slowed his step to match her stride.

“What just happened there?”

“It’s like we thought. He’s using the loop to get to them, break them down. Get what he wants from them,” he frowned, rubbing his throat. “I don’t believe my mother. It has to be Anakin. We either catch him tonight, or go up to Albany tomorrow. Get to the bottom of this. What time is it?”

“Just after 1 p.m.”

He pressed the button to the elevator repeatedly. “What the hell do we do now?”

The elevator finally arrived and he sagged against the wall. She rubbed his back, frowning.

“You’re exhausted. You haven’t eaten. There’s been so much information today. Let’s…talk to the Billabas. Then get something to eat and take a break.”
He leaned into her, pulling her into a hug. “Yeah…we…we’ve got the redhead. We’ve got the homeless man. The assassin is still a wildcard, along with the truck. I’m worried about all of the loose ends we still have.”

She shifted her weight from side to side. “What else are we missing?”

“He follows my credit card,” He looked at her, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. “We’ll need someone else’s to get through the rest of today. He is probably following yours too.”

She raised an eyebrow. “I have an idea.”

Once in the lobby, he noticed the secretary was still texting. She looked up when the elevator dinged to the ground floor and they had stepped out.

“How did it go?” She asked, as they approached.

“Oh, we cleared some things up,” Rey started. “Look, I’m wondering if…you could help me out with something…personal.”

The woman noticed her feigned discomfort as Rey gestured towards the washroom. She nodded. “Oh, yes. Of course.” She grabbed a smaller bag from her gigantic purse. Kylo spotted the matching wallet still resting inside.

“I’ll just…wait here,” he shrugged.

The secretary guided Rey towards the washroom, complaining about how men don’t know anything. He quickly grabbed her wallet and the card, tucking a discount card into the slot where it should be. Hopefully she wouldn’t notice until later.

A couple of minutes later, Rey and the secretary returned. She was still happily chatting.

“…and I can never take a break. It’s so exhausting and boring. I mean, have you seen my nails?”

“Yes, I know the feeling.”

“Everything okay?” He asked.

“Yes, time to go?”

He nodded. “Thank you for your help.”

They left and Rey shot him a sly smile.

“Robbing a civilian,” she smirked. “Thank goodness there’s no tomorrow.”

“She had several cards. I hope I got the one that’s not maxed out.”

She smiled brightly at him and he brushed his hand against her face. “Let’s hope that this works. I don’t want to lose you again.”

“I’ll do my best not to die.”

Another taxi ride and they were heading to the Billabas. Rey had interviewed them alone, while he was going through the other details with the other detectives. She hummed to herself and he cleared his throat.
“Do you remember what you said to them?”

She nodded. “I think that…I was actually mostly glad to be away from you, to be honest. Their daughter was their youngest. They have a teenager who was supposed to watch her and he was fairly devastated. I talked to them again after we…after we found her. He really blamed himself.”

He gripped her hand. “I hope that he’s okay.”

She sighed, turning to look out the window. “Does this ever start feeling normal to you? Always running around, chasing him? Worrying about me? About them?”

“No, sometimes I get frustrated with the routine, but I never feel like any of this is exactly normal. I want to break this loop. I want to get out of this so badly. Who knows what he could be planning right now, since we’re off the street and not following his clues,” he kissed her hand. “Come here.”

She leaned over, resting her head on his shoulder.

“Why did you fall in love with me?” She whispered.

“I…that’s…I’ve been thinking about that,” he brushed his hand through her hair. “You were the only one that I could trust in the beginning. You believed me. You trusted me. I didn’t deserve that trust. It’s like nothing I’ve ever felt before. You are caring, smart, and perfect to me. I love you because…you’re you. You wouldn’t let me bring you down, even when I was determined to push you away. We’re both not alone anymore.”

She looked up and gave him a small smile. They arrived to another relatively up-scale apartment building. It reminded him of his mother’s building in Albany, and he was reminded himself to call her again.

“We’ll get lunch after this, okay?”

She nodded. “That would be grand.”

They called up to the apartment and a young voice answered the intercom. “Hello?”

“Hello, it’s Detectives Niima and Ren, from the NYPD. We’re here to talk to your parents about your sister,” Rey said, calmly.

“I…okay.”

The door buzzed open and they took the elevator upstairs. Always so many quiet moments in cabs or elevators; he had too much time to think in those moments and tried to clear his mind. They rang the apartment door and an older woman answered, dressed in a simple black dress. Two other older children peered at them from the kitchen.

“Hello, Mrs Billaba, I hope that we’re not intruding.” Rey smiled, extending her hand. “This is my partner, Detective Ren.”

“Yes, Rey. Please come in,” she gestured for them to enter. “It’s been a bit of a strange morning, but we’re home now.”

“What happened today?” Kylo asked, scanning the entrance and meeting the eyes of the two other people in the room.

Mrs Billaba shrugged. “My husband got called into emergency surgery this morning, but then it
was cancelled, suddenly. My parents are coming into town, so Arthur and Lilly are home from school. It’s always chaos. Katelyn…we were waiting to bury her until my family got here from Korea.”

“We’re so sorry for your loss,” Kylo said.

She led them into the kitchen. The older of the children, Arthur, waved lightly at Rey. Lilly was writing in a diary, sighing when the other adults came into the room.

“I thought we were done with cops,” she mumbled, pulling her book off of the table and leaving the room.

“Lills…just misses our sister,” Arthur said. “Hi Rey.”

“Hi. We have some more questions, if it’s okay. About the day that your sister disappeared,” she asked, sitting next to him at the table. The boy, probably sixteen Kylo guessed, nodded.

“Yeah, it’s okay.”

His mother was in the background. “Would you like some coffee?”

“Yes,” Rey smiled at her. “It’s been a bit of a long morning for us.”

“We were just about to have a late lunch,” she opened the fridge. “Can I offer you some sandwiches? It’s really not a problem.”

Rey looked at him and he gave her a small nod. “If…as long as it’s not an inconvenience.”

She shook her head. “No, no. Of course not. I was expecting my husband to be here, so there’s extra. My mother would lose her mind if there wasn’t plenty of food in the fridge.”

Kylo quietly left Rey to talk to Arthur to find the other girl. He found her, in a room that she clearly had shared with her sister. She sat on a bed, still scribbling in her diary. She looked up and frowned at him.

“Hi,” he started. “What are you writing?”

She shrugged. “The…the therapist says I should be writing my feelings. I don’t really like it, but mom said it would be good. I don’t know if I believe her.”

He looked over at the other bed. “Is that…”

“Yeah. That’s her bed. Mom won’t let us move it,” she closed the book. “This sucks. I hate my grandparents and I don’t want to go to a stupid funeral.”

He sat down beside her and she moved away slightly. “How old are you?”

“Thirteen.”

“Everything sucks when you’re thirteen.”

She rolled her eyes. “I just…I just want things to go back to normal. Mom and dad are fighting a lot.”

“Lilly, you don’t have to listen to me, but my father died when I was a kid. I was so mad for so long. Things eventually went back to a new normal, but I didn’t…I didn’t really deal with it. I think
that it’s good to keep your diary. Keep writing. Keep talking to people,” he met her eyes. “We’re going to get the man who hurt your sister.”

She slowly nodded. “Yeah, sure.”

“We’re having lunch, if you’d like to come.”

“Not right now.”

“Okay.”

He left her, re-joining the others. The boy obviously liked talking to Rey. They ate and went over what the boy remembered from the day.

“Katie was just…so whiney,” he said. “She isn’t normally like that. I wanted to go to the skate park near here and she usually likes that, but that day, ugh. She was just being annoying. I had to take her with me. She usually likes listening to the kids playing.”

Rey nodded. “What else happened? Now that you’ve had time to think about it.”

“I…we still went to the park. I made her. She was super worried and wouldn’t leave me alone,” he finished his sandwich in one final bite. “My friends were there, but she wouldn’t talk to them. Rey, I thought I told you all this.”

Rey nodded. “You did, but now I want you to remember anything else that seemed weird about that day. What happened right before Katie disappeared? Think about it like this; put yourself back there. Remember how it sounded. What do you hear?”

Arthur frowned. “I guess…the other guys at the skate park. They were messing around, doing flips and shit. Some guy was playing music from his phone. I guess it was pretty loud.”

“What did you smell?”

He looked down and guilt spread across his face as he focused on his plate.

Kylo closed his eyes. “We…we don’t care about drugs.”

He looked up, glancing from his mother to Kylo. “We were smoking pot.”

His mother sighed heavily, but didn’t say anything.

“Who brought it?” Rey asked.

He shrugged. “That red-headed guy that shows up at the park from time to time. One of the other guys knows him or something. Katie just wanted to go home. I told her to sit down on the grass and not move and I’d come get her when I was done…”

“It’s fine, Arthur.”

“I got mad at her. I just…wanted to have fun,” his head sagged. “I didn’t even notice she was gone for like half an hour. Mom, I’m so, so sorry. I…I ruined our family.”

His mother moved to his side. “No, Arthur, you didn’t. We’re still here. We’re still a family. The detectives will find the man who hurt her now that you’re telling the truth.”

Arthur slumped against his mother, shaking his head. “It’s still my fault.”
“Have you seen the red-headed man again?” Kylo asked.

He shook his head. “My friend says he’s at Central Park now, still looking like a creep.”

“That’s really good, Arthur,” Kylo nodded. He turned to Mrs Billaba. “Did Katie draw or make anything before she was taken?”

She shook her head. “Nothing like that.”

He narrowed his eyes. “Why not?”

“She was blind, detective,” she blinked. “She was sick as a baby and went blind when she was two. Wasn’t that in your report?”

He glanced at Rey who paled. She’d missed that. He saw the panic in her eyes and he shook his head.

“I must have missed it when I re-read the file,” Kylo said. “There has been so much information about your daughter and the other children.”

“I can understand that.”

Rey tried to compose herself but he could see how she was shaken by her mistake.

“We have a full schedule,” he stood. “Thank you for answering our questions, and for lunch. We might call if we have anymore questions.”

After saying goodbye, alone again in the elevator, he saw Rey’s shoulders slump. “How did I miss that? How did I miss that she was blind?”

He tried to hug her but she pulled away.

“I don’t deserve this job,” she shook her head. “There’s always something I miss. I don’t understand why you say that I’m any good at this.”

“No, Rey,” he shook his head. “You…you see so many other things. This is just a small thing. We know that she was uncomfortable about being in the park. The same sounds were there, the same smells were there, so she knew where she was and knew that’s where she’d be taken.”

She remained facing away from him, silently watching the numbers change on the elevator.

“Still, I shouldn’t have made that mistake.”

“Hey,” he touched her arm and she finally turned. “I wasn’t a very good partner to you before. I was an awful partner. You were under pressure from the case and from working with me. You can’t blame yourself; I should have been helping you, not being mad at the world. You’ve helped me follow so many leads these todays; when we work together, we can balance one another. I need you. Don’t focus on this detail.”

She finally nodded and he folded her into a hug. “I’m sorry, Kylo.”

“Don’t be,” he kissed her forehead. “We’ll make it right.”

It was after 2 p.m. when they were back on the street. There were still many hours left until the benefit. Rey still appeared angry with herself at the overlooked fact. There were so many details to digest and so many things to unwind, but he had to make her feel better.
“We could go to the beach before the benefit,” he suggested. “To clear your head.”

She gave him a small smile, one that slowly lit up her face. “How did you know I liked the beach?”

“It’s one of the only good memories that you have of your parents,” he took her hand. “What else would make you happy? Take your mind off all of this?”

“I think…I think I’d like to get to know you,” she finally said. “I’d like to just sit down and talk, like two normal people. I…what we shared this morning means so much to me. I’d like to talk to you and just be around you. I’d like to try falling in love with you too.”

“I…” he met her eyes. “I’d like that. Let’s…there’s a café by the hotel. Let me take you for a coffee date.”

She softly smiled. “We’re chasing a child killer and I’m going on a date with my partner.”

“We take the moments that we have,” he kissed her lightly. “And I’d like more moments with you.”

She still looked slightly sad on the ride to the area around the hotel. He knew he’d made many mistakes when he was first promoted, but his partner had helped him get through the guilt. He should have been better to her. Again, he thought about the days that he’d clearly forgotten in the loop. How many days did she feel like this? Dying while clinging to a man whom she couldn’t get through to couldn’t have felt very reassuring.

They were a block from the hotel. If they got any word from Kenobi, they could be there quickly. Kylo still didn’t trust him.

His mother texted him as they ordered. She had to break into Luke’s to find more documents and she was going through them then. Good. He still felt annoyed at them keeping this from him.

They sat down in chairs near the back so he could see all of the exits. Despite the stolen credit card, he couldn’t help but be on alert.

“You mentioned your grandfather to your mother,” she asked. “Didn’t you know him growing up?”

He shook his head. “No. I didn’t know my grandmother either. I know even less about my dad’s side of the family. He seemed like he grew up with no one. He knew people, had friends, but he never mentioned his parents at all. He died when I was a kid, so I could never really ask either. Mom doesn’t bring it up. But her mother died in childbirth.”

“I’m so sorry, Kylo.”

“Everything was hard back then,” he sighed. “Her adopted parents died in a car accident a few
months after my dad. Mom…she took a month off work and took me out of school. We went to Italy and I hated every minute. I just wanted to be home.”

She nodded. “I guess…I guess you know about me.”

“Yeah,” he reached for her hand. “Rey, I know. And I'm sorry.”

“I think I’m fine now,” she took another sip. “It’s been so long and I’m so far away. Maybe they’re dead, maybe they’re alive. I could find them if I looked, but I don’t feel like ripping off that bandage.”

“I was so angry at my past for so long. It made me hard to work with, especially as your partner. But now…you’ve filled a hole in me. I really need you and care about you,” he said. “You told me once to just be like this from now on, and then we’ll be okay.”

She touched his knee and smiled. “I think that we will.”

They talked the rest of the afternoon, sharing good and bad memories: things from the academy, things from school, trips and friends and favourite movies. She was smiling more, relaxing into her seat. It was a normal date. He wished that this could be the final loop but with Quirin being taken, he knew there would have to be another day.

As the afternoon wore on, he spotted a familiar face approach the counter. The party coordinator, Ahsoka, stood waiting for her order. Rey noticed his eyes and gave him a confused look.

“Who’s that?”

“The girl that will get shot at the benefit tonight if we show up,” he stood. “I’m going to go talk to her. I’ll be right back.”

Ahsoka was adding sugar to her to-go cup when he approached.

“Hi, that looks good,” he said. “What did you get?”

Her eyes roamed up his body until she met his gaze. She flipped her hair. “Oh, it’s just a latte. I have a long night ahead of me, entertaining bossy rich people.”

“That sounds boring,” he glanced at the name on her cup. “Ahsoka.”

She laughed. “You actually said it right! No one can spell it, let alone say it.”

“Well, it’s a nice name.”

She tilted her head. “Have we met before…?”

“Kylo. No, I don’t think so. I’d remember you,” he put his hand on the counter, near her waist. “So, are you working at the benefit tonight.”

“Yes,” she said, leaning towards him. “Will you be there?”

He shook his head. “No, we’re working. But I think that someone I might know might be there. Can you give me a call, when a man named Skywalker gets there? I was talking to Dr Kenobi this morning and I really need to talk to Mr Skywalker. He’s a hard man to find.”

He wrote down his number on a napkin and handed it to her. Her fingers brushed his and she smiled brightly at him.
“So, there’s no other reason you’re giving me your number?”

“No,” he winked. “Just…just let me know, okay?”

“Sure,” she shoved the napkin into her bag. “I’ll talk to you later.”

He walked back to Rey who looked at him, stonefaced.

“You didn’t have to flirt with her.”

He took her hand. “She’s attracted to me. I don’t care about her, other than I don’t want her to die tonight. We have to do what we have to today, okay?”

She finally nodded. “I can’t believe that I’m actually jealous.”

“Rey, I’m yours. I promise. Let me get you another coffee.”

He felt slightly embarrassed for flirting with Ahsoka but he had to get to someone who wasn’t Kenobi who would be there. He returned to their table and Rey still looked at him with mild annoyance.

“Who were you dating before me?” She asked.

Oh god, he’d brought this on himself. “Not really anyone. It’s been mostly work the last few years. The last woman I actually tried to date was a nightmare. I think it lasted two months. She cheated on me. I didn’t take it well.”

“So you know that feeling then, the one I just got.”

He nodded. “I know. And I’m sorry. It was for the case, Rey. Who was the last person you slept with?”

“Besides you, on days I can’t remember?”

He gave her a quirked grin.

She returned the look. “He was…he was another cop, of course. It was before I got the promotion. We just…it was a one-night stand and that’s so not me. I ended up at his place after an after-work thing. It was…awkward. I…I haven’t talked to him since.”

He felt a stab of bitterness when he imagined her with anyone else. “And now you have me.”

“Yes, in this weird day that will end up with me dying,” she smiled lightly, despite the tone of her voice. “Kylo, I’m so glad that we were able to stop and think, but mostly that we got to talk. You…you really are different. I wouldn’t have thought about sitting with you, like this, yesterday.”

“It’s because of you, you know.”

“I know.”

The hours continued to tick by. He kept glancing at his phone, waiting for anything. They talked a little more, and then just sat in silent thought. He had so much to untangle. Why did he bring him into the loop on this particular day? Why was he out after the two DA candidates? So many questions and still no real answers. It was dark out now, so their night was about to begin. Rey was in the washroom when he finally got a text.
He’s here. Xoxo Ahsoka.

He gripped the phone. Time to act. He was standing when Rey returned and she caught his serious look.

“Is it time?”

He nodded, quickly kissing her again. “Let’s find out who he is so we can stop him tomorrow.”

She hugged him. “Just don’t…I hope it’s not painful.”

He held her, trying not to shake. They were about to enter a space that he knew would turn into danger. This was her saying goodbye.

“We’re going to stop this, I promise,” he said, cupping her face.

The staff at the café were starting to clean up. It was more than time to go.

They approached the hotel, and he kept glancing for the truck or anyone that looked out of place. They couldn’t enter the ballroom through the main door, everyone would see them. There had to be a back way in. Ahsoka waved at them as they entered the foyer.

“Hi,” she greeted. “Nice to see you again.”

“Thanks. Ahsoka, is there another way in? We can’t go through the main door. I want to be discreet,” he said, scanning the lobby.

She nodded. “Yeah, there’s the back way. It’s more of a fire exit, but someone has messed with the alarm. They’re fixing it, though.”

Shit. “Okay. Show us.”

She looked from him to Rey and then nodded. She led them through the kitchen and up to a back stairwell. “This door goes outside. Go up to the second floor. You’ll end up behind the ballroom. Just go through the next door marked Staff.”

He nodded, taking out his gun. The girl took a few steps back, watching Rey do the same.

“You’re cops?”

“Yes.”

“This isn’t good.”

“No, no it’s not. Go out there. Act normal, please. Pull the alarm if anything happens.”

She nodded and dashed off. They started the slow climb up to the ballroom. Rey steadied her breathing and he matched it, worried that his heart was going to beat out of his chest.

Standing outside the door, he gave her a small nod. He returned it. He pushed it open.

The lights were dimmed and Kenobi was giving his speech. He strained his eyes, finally finding his table. Aside from his empty seat, there were still three empty places.

The only stranger at the table had a familiar shade of hair.
Sitting next to Erso’s mistress, was Amilyn Holdo.

He heard Rey’s gasp as she spotted her as well. There were waiters milling about so no one had noticed them. What the hell was she doing there?

Across the expanse of the ballroom, he saw the main door open, briefly filling the entrance with light. A tall figure strode into the room. He recognized him. It was the man from Rose’s security picture. He was here. He had him.

As the man approached the table, he froze halfway across the room. Kylo couldn’t see his eyes but it was clear that they had been spotted.

“Get Holdo, I’ll get him.” Kylo whispered and started towards the man. Kenobi, on the stage, noticed him starting up the aisle and paused.

In the sudden, shocked quiet of the room, he raised his voice and pointed his gun directly at the stranger.

“You need to tell stop right there!”

He was close enough to see the man’s face in the low light. His eyes were a deep yellow as he stared at him. He slowly shook his head as the house lights were brought up. The guests were gasping, ducking behind tables as he kept his gun aimed at the man.

“I found you!” Kylo kept his voice and gun steady. “Why are you doing this? What do you want from me? Where is the boy!”

The man had no taunts this time, he only gave him a small smile and took a long step back.

“Stop!”

He heard a commotion behind him and had to glance over his shoulder for a second. He heard Holdo shouting at Rey and he spotted the gun in her hands. Rey had her weapon pointed at her, demanding to know what she was doing there. It was only a brief glance, but that’s all the stranger needed to start striding back down the aisle, tossing empty chairs behind him as he went. Shit, shit, no.

He ran after, until he heard a shot and a sharp pain burnt through his side. Screams filled the room and everything was turned into chaos. Shot again, he turned, seeing Holdo still struggling with Rey. She trailed the gun from Kylo to Rey. Rey had a firm look on her face, not backing down. It took every ounce of strength to turn to face the two women, letting the man go. Not today.

“Hey!” He shouted. He felt blood starting to seep through his shirt and pain arc up his side as he firmed his arm. “What the hell are you doing here, Holdo?”

“You couldn’t solve it! He…he’s going to fix everything!” She shouted. “No matter who wins, I’ll get to be on the right side.”

“You fucking poisoned us! You fucking bitch!” He yelled. They both had their guns trailed on her. People were scrambling around them, running for the exits. He had lost track of Kenobi.

“What are you talking about?”

He saw Rey briefly lose focus, looking at his wound. That was all Holdo needed and she pulled the trigger, hitting Rey in the neck. She dropped to her knees with a cry and Kylo emptied his gun into
the ADA.

With the shots still echoing in his ears, he ignored her and turned back to Rey, grabbing at her neck.

“Shh…shh. It’s okay,” he placed one hand on the wound and scooped her up. There would be an ambulance. There had to be one by now, or at least patrol cars with a first aid kit and a clear path to the nearest hospital. He carried her towards the main door when the dark figure again filled the doorway.

“You’re getting closer,” he smiled. “But I have bigger plans for you that you’ll soon see. But today, this is your end. See you tomorrow.”

He spotted the phone in his hand and saw him push in a code. A dull explosion above him brought his eyes to the ceiling and the large, heavy, decorative chandelier that hung above their heads. The fixture shook and he saw it starting to fall.

This was going to hurt.
Day 19

Chapter Summary

Kylo wakes up and things are not the same. Our killer is revealed. Read the tags for warnings!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 19

The thing Kylo felt most when he woke up, with the shiver and jolt, was that his body was broken. His arms and legs refused to move with him. There was pain everywhere; it knocked the wind out of him. Pushing passed the panic, his breathing felt unsteady when it came back to him and his heart was struggling to beat normally. There was an ache in his side and lingering pain his neck, but his entire body felt slow and heavy. He tried to clear his throat and felt like the hole from the knife was still there from the previous today. His arms felt like rubber. He felt blindly at his neck, trying to calm down. It was like the previous day, with the addition of having a fucking chandelier fall on him, and the ache of the gunshot added on top of that. He looked at the clock, his vision blurred: 5.48. His hands were shaking and he tried to force himself to breathe normally. He wasn’t stabbed today. He wasn’t shot today. The chandelier hadn’t fallen on them today. Why were the ghost wounds there? He blinked against the pain that throbbed in his eyes, trying to wake up. The previous today had given him so much information and he needed to untangle it in the few minutes he had before Finn showed up.

Again, he reached for his throat, rubbing it lightly. The pain in his side was greater, like it should be bleeding. His shoulders, his head, his legs, everything felt like it had been crushed. It felt like it only happened minutes ago and that sent him into a deeper panic. He sat up, moved to the kitchen and grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge. He had no idea how he got to his feet. So, the killer was apparently after both Kenobi and Palpatine and had made promises to Holdo. What was he planning with them?

Everything looked like it was in double and the light from the sun hurt his head. How was he going to get this day under control? He slid down to the floor of his kitchen and sobbed, still feeling the dampness of her blood on his hands and heard the screams from around them. That bitch had shot them both. And Holdo had also been the one to poison them.

His body felt stiff and his hands were tingling. The room blurred slightly. This had never happened before. Sure, he had felt lingering pains and echoes of memories, but this put him in pure weakness and vulnerability. He needed to move. He needed to do something. Finn would be there soon.

He stumbled to his feet as his radio clicked on.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”
He opened the door and met Finn’s shocked eyes.

“Holy shit! How did you…” he could tell that Finn wanted to say more, but noticed the dullness of his eyes. It was that bad, fuck. “What happened to you, man?”

“It…it’s a long story…Just come inside. I need…I need coffee and time to think,” he supported himself on the wall. What had happened?

Finn just nodded. “Are you…okay? That guy paid me $50 to slip this note under your door, but what the hell. Your nose…you’re bleeding, man.”

He wiped at his face. Fuck.

“Okay…Finn…look I know this going to sound…insane. But…I need you to make some calls for me, okay? I’ll pay you. I…just need to sit down,” he moved to his kitchen and collapsed down in a chair. What was happening today? Is this what happens when he got close to that man?

The other man closed the door and looked at him carefully. “You really don’t look good. Who should…who should I call? The hospital?”

He pulled out his phone, fumbled to unlock it. His fingers weren’t working but after two tries, he got it and tossed it onto the table. “I…I just call Rey.”

“Rey? No, you need to go to the hospital.”

“No! I need…I need to talk to her.”

Finn grabbed the phone and scrolled until he found her number.

“Hi Rey? Yeah…yeah it’s Finn. Okay, yeah, he’s…I’m at his place. Yeah, I know. It’s really messed up right now. He’s really pale and like, bleeding and bruised. But they don’t look like normal bruises. He needs to go to a hospital. Where are you? Sure, yeah. You know the stand? It’s just upstairs from that,” he paused. “Okay, your partner? Yeah, I’ll come down and let you in. Just…just get here soon.”

He was fading in and out of the conversation before Finn planted the phone in his hand.

“Just…just don’t die on me, okay?”


He heard the crow hitting his window and felt everything grey out.

Someone was tapping on his face. The crow? It was getting harder. Stupid crow. He didn’t know where he was as he blinked awake. The room slowly spun into focus and he saw Rey looking down at him, with Finn beside her. He was on the bed. He wasn’t dead. That was a relief.

“Kylo, what happened to you?” she gasped. “The last time I saw you…you didn’t look like this.”

He sat up, gripping her into his arms. “Oh, thank God, you’re okay.”

She tried to support him as he slumped against her, not pulling away but slightly resisting.

“Kylo, you need to go to the hospital.”

“But you’re here. I’m okay now,” he shook his head. “No hospital. You need to…call Dameron.”
“Why?” She held a towel to his bleeding nose. It was one of his good ones but he let the thought go in a second. “You…you’re all bruised up or something.”

“I just…died yesterday,” he mumbled through the towel.

“What?” She removed it, checking the blood quickly.

“I…it was today. Not yesterday. But it’s the same day. It’s always the same goddamned day. Rey, he’s after Kenobi. And Palpatine. And he’s using my family name. We’ve been in the loop before. You have to…you have to call Dameron and then Kristina. Finn needs to get the homeless man and Rose…” he rambled. “You’re so beautiful, Rey.”

Rey looked desperately at Finn, returning the towel to his face. “I can’t get it to stop bleeding.” He grabbed her hand and stared at her.

“If I call Dameron, will you go to the hospital?”

“No, I just need to rest,” he lightly lifted the towel. “I need Finn to find the homeless man.”

He wouldn’t let her go and she eventually sighed, looking up at Finn. “Go get my phone. It’s in my bag.”

She removed the towel and sighed at him. She tucked a strand of hair behind his ear and looked at him with worried eyes. He leaned into her touch and she stilled her hand on his cheek.

“What happened to you?”

“You don’t…you don’t feel different?” He asked, remembering her panicked eyes as she bled to death in his hands.

She shook her head. “I was a little tired this morning, but I’m always tired.”

“Not like…not like you just had your throat slit? Or a chandelier fell on you?”

With wide eyes, she shook her head. “How would that even feel?”

“Like hell.”

Finn came back into his vision and handed her the phone. She dialled the lab and then handed the phone to Kylo.

“Yeah, it’s Dameron. And it’s too early. What’d you want?”

“It’s Kylo. I need you to come to my place,” he almost didn’t recognise his own voice. “Just…drop everything and come here. I need to talk to you about your nephew and a German assassin.”

“Oh, Rey, you sound a lot like your partner, who sounds like shit, who’s saying some crazy stuff.” Dameron sat back and he heard the chair creak. “What the hell are you talking about, Kylo?”

“Please. Poe. Just get here,” he said. “Trust me, it’s important.”

“Okay, it’s not like I have a shit ton to do here anyway.”

He thrust the phone at Rey and she gave him the address, walking away as she continued to talk. He thought he heard something along the lines of looks like hell, said something about dying
yesterday, looked fine yesterday…He studied his ceiling and shook his head. If he could just rest for a few hours, then he would feel better. He didn’t have time to go to the hospital.

“Kylo, Kylo, look I…I know a doctor,” she said, tapping his leg. “Will that be okay?”

“Yeah,” he sighed. “But we need to call Kristina Jinn. Quirin…he might know where he is.”

“You are making no sense,” she sat down next to him, rubbing his knee. “Who’s Kristina?”

“Quirin’s mom. You know? The boy? He loves Legos,” he waved his hand. “We told him to count. He can…count to one hundred in Spanish and English.”

She gripped his leg. “You need a doctor.”

“I need you.”

She sucked in a tired breath. “What’s happened to you?”

“Just…call her,” he reached for her phone and dialled the Jinns’ number. “Tell her…tell her that I need to talk to Quirin. Tell him it’s Kylo and we need to know how much he counted.”

She sighed again, and he could hear the ringing of the phone.

“Hello, Mrs Jinn? Yes, it’s Detective Rey Niima from the NYPD. I…I have a very strange question for you. I…my partner’s name is Detective Kylo Ren. He says he needs to talk to your son, is he awake?” Rey kept stroking his leg as she spoke. It helped him focus, feeling the previous day start to fade. “Hi, it’s Detective Rey. Kylo would like to speak with you.”

She nodded and handed him the phone. A small voice came on the line.

“Kylo?”

“Hey, Quirin.”

“Are you okay? You sound sick.”

“Yeah, I’m…i’m really sick right now, Quirin. How much…how much did you count the other todays? I’m sorry…I’m sorry we couldn’t save you.” He couldn’t help the sob that escaped his mouth.

“Don’t be sad. It wasn’t that bad…I counted so much. It was over 100 times,” Quirin’s voice was excited and happy. “Mom’s looking at me funny. Why doesn’t she remember?”

“My partner doesn’t remember either, right? We’re special,” Kylo sighed. “I just don’t know why.”

There was a long pause as Quirin hummed to himself.

“When’s your birthday?”

“What?”

“Mine’s April 24. When’s yours?”

Kylo’s vision seemed to steady finally. “Mine is March 24.”

“That’s cool.”
Kylo shut his eyes, feeling a dull ache in his heart that had nothing to do with his injuries. “Listen, Quirin…I don’t have a dad anymore. He died a while ago. Can you guess when he died?”

“Probably the 24th?”

“Yeah, you’re a good guesser. He was murdered, like the man is trying to do to you. On August 24th.”

“Wow. Kylo are you going to come see me today?” Quirin yawned. “I’m kinda sleepy. I got up really early this morning.”

“Sure thing, bud,” he tried to sit up but Rey pushed him down again. “Quirin, I’m going to see a doctor soon. He’ll make me better. Then we’ll come by, okay?”

“Cool! Bye!”

He let the phone flop beside him and Rey reached for it.

“What the hell is going on Kylo?” She asked.

“Just…call your doctor. Make sure the door is locked then come back here and lay down with me,” he reached for her hand. “Don’t leave me, please.”

“Okay, okay…I…I’ll be right back.”

She left him alone to make the call. He closed his eyes and managed to fall asleep. He drifted in the blackness and let the heaviness take him into it. Still, he couldn't rest long. His mind wouldn't let him. He woke up when he felt something against his chest. Blinking awake, he reached and felt Rey’s head against his shoulder.

She looked up when she felt him stir. “What happened to you?”

“You have to believe me,” he said, stroking her head. “You all have to believe me.”

“Just tell me,” she leaned against him again. “Please. Kylo, Poe is here and he wants to talk to you. I was letting you sleep, but I’m glad you’re awake.”

“You stayed,” he ran his hands through her hair.

“I was worried about you. Kylo, did someone come here and do this to you?”

“It’s…it’s like I said. It’s the same day. The same goddamned day, over and over again. I don’t know why I’m like this today, I’ve died before. Yeah, if…if Poe is here I need to talk to him. Can you help me up?” He shifted, moving to try to stand. She had to guide him into the kitchen, but his legs were coming back to him.

“Holy shit, what happened to you?” Dameron looked at him with wide eyes. “Are we taking him to the hospital?”

“No, I’m…I’m feeling better,” he mumbled, slumping down on the couch. “Right? Don’t I look better?”

Finn and Rey exchanged looks and she shrugged. “Well, your nose has stopped bleeding.”

“See? Already better?” He pulled her down to sit next to him and she let him lean against her.
“You need…you need to go get Elias. We…we have so much to do, and I feel…I feel better.”

“Liar,” Rey shot. “Poe, he keeps saying that he’s lived through this day before and he won’t go to the hospital. I have a guy that I know who’s a doctor. He’ll be here soon. But I think that we should believe him. I mean, we saw him last night. It was only five or six hours ago. No one looks like this if they’ve just been in their own apartment.”

“Do you believe him?” Dameron asked.

Rey shook her head. “He’s my partner…and what he just says sounds so unbelievable. But if he thinks what’s happening has already happened, and it’s for the children, then we need to believe him.”

He leaned up to kiss her cheek. “I love you so much.”

Dameron looked more annoyed and put his head in his hands. “So…so we follow the insane man who looks like he’s on death’s door. Yeah, how does he…how does he know all this stuff?”

“It’s the same day for me,” he shrugged. “By the way, I think I owe you like $3,000 from another today. We were at the Kenobi fundraiser and got our throats slit. Then we were there again, got shot, and got a chandelier dropped on us.”

“See? He’s insane? How does he know about my nephew? What the hell, can he even say anything normal?” Dameron looked at Finn and frowned. “And…how did you get here?”

“Some dude in black gave me $50 to slip a note under his door and run,” he lifted his shoulders. “I needed the money, what can I say. He’s also a huge jerk who never says hello to us.”

“I’m not a jerk, not anymore,” Kylo countered. He leaned down to rest his head in Rey’s lap and stretched out. “Can you guys just stop it?”

“Look,” Rey said, gently repositioning his head. “I…I think that you should just listen to him. If he’s right, then this is about the case. Finn, go to wherever he says you should be, right Kylo? And Dameron, you, I guess go get whoever he’s talking about?”

Kylo was more focused on the material of her jogging pants than the others but heard them eventually agree.

“But, Rey…what are you going to do about him?” Finn asked.

“I’m fine.”

Rey gently stroked his hair, grimacing as she felt dried blood there. “No, you’re not. My doctor friend will be here soon so, I guess…just go and let us know what’s happening.”

Kylo was too exhausted to mention the part about the phones and shut his eyes. He scrubbed his face and asked her to get a notepad. He gave the address to Finn and then let the pain overtake him. Why was he so tired, he thought angrily. Maybe the days were finally catching up with him? Maybe meeting that man and getting the name had pushed him to be in this state. He didn’t realise that he had fallen asleep again until he felt someone opening his eye to peer into it with a small flashlight.

He sat up too quickly and instantly felt lightheaded, trying to push away against whoever was trying to do this to him.
“See? He just won’t stay still.” Rey sighed. “Unless he’s passed out.”

“Stabbed he said he was? Shot? Old the injury is, but healed properly it has not. Other injuries, I can’t explain.” An unfamiliar voice croaked. “Rest he needs. Not much I can do here. Could be internal bleeding.”

His finally managed to blink himself awake and saw a strange, small old man standing beside the couch. Rey was still there so he tried to calm down at having the minute figure leer at him.

“I was shot and stabbed and died in a car accident and died in a fire. And then a chandelier fell on me,” he managed to say. “Oh, and I jumped off a bridge. What do you say to that?”

He finally was able to focus. The small man moved away from him to sit on the other sofa. Rey had changed into her normal work clothes. Everything about the day was starting to get away from him. He looked into the deep brown eyes of the man sitting near him and reached for Rey’s hand.

“Dying, hard is it?” The doctor asked,

He rolled his eyes. “Well, yes. It sucks. She dies too. Check her out, please.”

“What? I die? What are you talking about?” Rey’s attention turned to him. The doctor looked her up and down and shook his head. “Kylo, this is all sounding insane.”

“Look, I don’t know how it’s happening, or why it’s happening, but for me, it’s the same day. Over and over again. I need…there are people we need to talk to. This case and the man killing the children are at the centre of this. Quirin gave us a hint. One hundred over one hundred times. That’s like, what? Over an hour? The place we’re looking for is over an hour from where he was snatched. We have that lead, as well as Rose’s lead at the courthouse; she has to stop Holdo from going anywhere. She’s working with him from the inside. I’ve seen his face now, we can find him,” he tried to sound firm but the other two just exchanged confused looks. “And I should probably call my mother.”

Rey sighed, heavily. “What do you think, Dr Yoda?”

“Injured he has been. That is clear. Bad dream perhaps,” the other man, Yoda, said. “Went out drinking, got beat up and forgot it.”

“No, this is a nightmare,” he mumbled. “Look, we have so much to do today. Can you just…give me some painkillers or something? To get me through the day?”

Yoda frowned, deeply. “Rest you need. Out you should not be going. Your partner is fine. Injured you are. Home. Rest.”

“No,” he shook his head. “He’s going to come after us no matter what I do.”

Yoda shrugged and scratched his head. “Fine. But soon, rest you must.”

He wandered over to a bag by the door and pulled out a small bottle of painkillers. He handed it to Rey with a grim nod. “Take these he should. Go I must. You are a stubborn, stupid man.”

“Wait,” he asked, looking at the blood on his sleeve. That had to be a connection. “If you were looking for specific types of patients, like blood types or something, how would you find that?”

The older man frowned. “Shiny. You search Shiny.”
“What?”

“State Health Information Network for New York. SHIN-NY. Shiny,” he shrugged on his coat. “Nearly all patient records we have. Use it often we do for diagnoses.”

He nodded. “So, any doctor can search it?”

“Well, most doctors, yes,” he eyed him. “Search for others in a time loop I should, hmm?”

Kylo rolled his eyes and stood, feeling steadier on his feet. He grabbed his phone and turned to Rey. “No, that would be ridiculous. Rey, give him your phone.”

“What? Kylo, we need them to get in touch with Poe and Finn. Why does he need my phone?”

“The phones have been programmed so that he can follow us. If he takes the phones and goes wherever, that will throw him off. Just… put them in your office or something,” he gave the doctor his phone and Rey glared at him. “Just text them that we’ll be calling them from another number.”

She complied then reluctantly handed the phone to Yoda who was shaking his head.

“Much you have seen if same day you are living,” the doctor said. “An old friend to me, drunk one night, said something similar. Long ago this was, but frustrated he was. We are connected to moments and memories, carry them forward we do. Tempted, we can be, by chances to be rich or have power. Imagine what evil can be done when no one remembers but you do: right things to say, right ways to act. Careful you must be.”

“What happened to your friend? Did he tell you how to break the loop?” Kylo asked.

Yoda grimly shook his head. “Doctor he was. Doctor he still may be. I have not heard from him in many, many years. Enjoyed the feeling of having the power over life and death he did. Go now I must.”

“Thank you so much, doctor. I’ll…I’ll call you if he faints again,” she frowned at Kylo as she spoke.

“Hrrummph,” he mumbled. He gave a small wave as he left the apartment.

Rey kept her eyes on Kylo and shook her head. She went to the kitchen and poured him water. She handed him the glass and a pill from the bottle. He smiled as he swallowed the tiny capsule.

“Do you believe me?” He asked.

“Let’s just…pretend that I do for now,” she gestured towards the sofa and he nodded. It was getting better, but he felt like still needed to sleep for a week. He sat down next to her. “What do we do?”

“I got so much more information yesterday that I need to untangle. I don’t like the idea of Quirin dying again, so we need to go get him and take him with us. I still can’t find where the assassin, Maul, is staying. But we need to call Rose and she needs to stop the red-headed man that will show up at the courthouse and stop Holdo. Lock her in a fucking closet or something. I also need her to keep an eye on the DA, see if anyone suspicious comes by for him. We’re going to take the train up to Albany to talk to my mother. Then, when we get back and if we live through the day, we go talk to Ahsoka about the Kenobi fundraiser,” he saw her eyes glaze over at the amount of information. “Rey, we’ve been through the loop before. That’s how he knows the days. I…I’ve only knowingly been in the loop for like twenty days. He’s using my family name. My mother says
it’s not my grandfather, but I don’t know who else it could be. We need to make sure what she’s saying is the truth.”

Rey let her hair down from her ponytail and shook her head. “So, go through that again. Slowly please.”

He sat up on the sofa. “I think I might be related to him, somehow. I need you to come with me to my mother’s. I need to talk to her, and I can’t leave you alone.”

“I’ll be home or at the station — I’ll be fine. And I can take care of myself, Kylo.”

He shook his head. “No. First, we go get Quirin. Then we go talk to my mother. And see my grandfather.”

“Kylo, we’re not kidnapping a child and taking him to your mother’s. Are you even listening to yourself?”

He reached out to cup her face. “Rey, I know that this isn’t a normal day. You came here and saw me like this and that can’t feel good. But I want you to know how much I need you. You help me see so much and I know I wasn’t a very good partner before this. If I could go back and change it, I would. I need you.”

She slightly leaned into his hand, considering his words. “I know I didn't get to pick you, and it’s been hard, especially with this case…but you’re my partner…I have to trust you. Kylo, you’ve never talked to me like this before.”

“I wish I had,” he leaned forward to kiss her and she closed her eyes. She didn’t respond, but didn’t move away either. Same pattern. Same Rey. “What we’ve shared on these other todays has been something beautiful and it’s making me a better person and a better partner. I know it’s hard to believe, but I love you so much and it hurts to lose you at the end of every day. But the closer I get to him, the closer I come to ending this nightmare.”

“It’s been so long since someone wanted me,” she met his eyes. “Do you really mean that? That I’m going to die today?”

“Yes,” he nodded. “Before midnight.”

She took a long deep breath. “Then I guess we should get going. You need to shower and change and then…then we’ll do your plan.”

He lightly kissed her again, moving to stand. He swayed slightly, but shook it off. She watched him start to remove his shirt as he headed to the washroom, before turning her head. He showered as thoroughly as he could, shifting from feeling lightheaded to a dull numbness. His bones felt like they were bruised. He could rest on the train, he decided. While he changed, putting on his usual suit coat out of exhaustion, he wondered if he should call his mother before leaving, but came to the conclusion that it would be better just to go.

Back in the living room, he noticed Rey wasn’t sitting on the sofa. He panicked for a moment before spotting her on his balcony. He walked to the door and saw the way that she stood, looking out over the city. There was a distant, sad emotion on her face. Opening the door, she turned and looked at him.

“Well, at least you’re looking better,” she smiled lightly. “There was a dead crow out here. I put it in a plastic bag so we can throw it out. Ready to go?”
“Yeah, we are running out of time.”

She nodded and tapped the balcony rail. He stumbled slightly and she sighed and grabbed his arm to help him out of the apartment. Today was going to suck more than usual.

After tossing out the crow, they walked out onto the street. He wasn’t sure if he felt eyes on them or not. The taxi ride out to the Jinns was mostly silent. She seemed to be thinking through the plan and how he had described the day.

“What happened on the first day that this started?” She asked.

He nodded. “It was like any other day dealing with this case. We went to the Elias’s house. That’s Poe’s nephew. His mother is trying to sell him or something, so she lied to us. He kept that part from us, so he was my first suspect. Then, I ran into the homeless man for the first time. He showed up again later in the day with another note for me. He had the boy’s t-shirt, so we thought he might be another suspect. We get nothing from him. But on a couple of other days, he blew us up. That’s why Finn has to stop him. If we run or if we hide, he goes after other people. The DA is being manipulated; it’s the same with Kenobi, the guy running against him. I think that he’s manipulating them to get control of that office. The boy, Quirin, is in the loop too and the other kids have been as well. The families we’ve talked to gave us evidence that the kids have all seen the three men that are a part of this damned day. He’s been using them to loop other days, using the kids to get to the two candidates.”

She slowly blinked. “You say all of this like it’s really happening.”

“It is,” he frowned. “The parents are also connected to healthcare. And we should check their birthdays. If…if we’re all born on the 24th, that might at least explain how we’re connected.”

“That’s something we should have noticed before,” she sighed. “We’ve missed so much.”

“Well, this is giving us a chance to tie up loose ends,” he reached for her hand. “We’ll get through this day, eventually.”

“Are you worried that he’ll think that we’re running?” She asked. “What happens if we run?”

“He escalates and it’s not pretty. Just…just believe me. Things might go wrong. Other people might die. But you have to trust me. When we get this day right it will have been worth it,” he lightly squeezed her hand and she gave him a light smile. “I don’t want to lose you again.”

“I’ll try my best not to die. And you should try that too.”

“Sounds good.”

The Jinns were just about to leave when they pulled up. Quirin excitedly waved at them and ran up to hug Kylo. His parents looked thoroughly confused. He knelt down, hugging the boy closely.

“Are you feeling better?” Quirin asked.

“Much better,” he leaned in to whisper in his ear, hoping it didn’t sound like that much of a lie. “You need to come with us, okay? We’re going on a little trip.”

He nodded, eagerly. “Mom and dad won’t like it though.”

“Well, we’ll try to convince them,” he stood, taking the boy by the hand to walk up to Kristina and Mats.
“Ma’am, we spoke on the phone this morning,” Rey said. “We have…we have another strange request.”

“Yes, Detective Niima. Quirin said you two would be coming here. We were just about to go to shopping and then to the park,” Kristina shook her head. “He’s never mentioned knowing any police officers before, but it was all he could talk about this morning.”

“With your permission, we’d like to take Quirin with us. We have received some information that he might be in danger, so it’s important that he’s protected,” Kylo said, watching them exchange worried looks. “It’s…I know that’s hard news to take, but we want to keep him safe.”

“What? That’s…” Mats shook his head. “Where will you take him?”

“To my mother’s. In Albany. He’ll be safe there,” he motioned to Rey who nodded, taking out her notepad. He wrote down his mother’s address and phone number. “You can pick him up there tomorrow.”

“This is…can I see some identification, please?” He asked, staring at the paper in his hand.

They showed their IDs and badges and Quirin looked up at them with curious eyes.

“Please, mom. Kylo’s my friend,” he asked. “I don’t want the bad men to take me.”

Kristina took a deep breath. “I…I if you think that it’s for the best. Maybe you should take him with you. I don’t like this, I really don’t, but if Quirin is afraid then maybe…God, I don’t know.”

Mats rubbed his wife’s shoulder. “My sister lives in Albany. I’d feel better if you left him with her, in that case.”

“Sure, yes sir,” Kylo nodded. “Give us the information.”

Mats scrolled through his phone and took Rey’s pen. He wrote the address on the back of the sheet of paper that had his mother’s address and handed it back to them.

“Just…just keep him safe,” Kristina looked at them with concern.

They hugged their son goodbye and he went with them to the waiting taxi. Rey still looked displeased with the situation, but answered any questions that Quirin had as they drove to the train station.

“Quirin, what happened on the other todays? When you were counting?” Kylo asked.

The boy shrugged. “He didn’t take me at the park, but when I got home the really scary man with bad teeth came. I was scared of getting blowed up again, but he just took me. Mom and dad didn’t even notice. He put me into the back part of the car and it was really, really dark. But I wasn’t scared. I had to count, like you said. I think I did a good job, right? We drove over one hundred hundreds and it was kinda hard to keeping counting. I had to count with all my fingers and toes. But then he brought me to the little house. I don’t like it there. The tall man, he asked me if I knew Ben and I said that I did, but couldn’t remember who he was. That made him really, really mad. Then he left for a while and came back and he was really mad. He kept asking me all night and I got really sleepy. It was still dark when he made me go to sleep. Then I woke up in my bed. Just like that.”

“That’s really good, Quirin. We need to find that house that he takes you to. And we will, soon,” Kylo nodded.
Rey put her arm around the boy. “You were really brave to do that, Quirin.”

“Do you remember yet?” He asked her. “Maybe Kylo can learn you how to be in the loop too.”

“I don’t think he can,” she shook her head. “You two are the special ones.”

By the time they reached the train station, Quirin was even more excited to be taking a trip, since it was something different. It would take almost three hours so Rey grabbed a snack for Quirin and coffees and water for them. Once they reached their seats, she handed him another pill to take. He was starting to feel better physically, but he was still mostly exhausted. Quirin sat across from them when Kylo rested his head on Rey’s shoulder, in a small private section of the car.

“Rey, do you love Kylo?”

She was taking a sip of her coffee and swallowed hard. “Quirin, that’s a very personal question.”

“Still a good question,” Kylo winked at the boy.

“He’s told me what’s happening and I have to believe him, since we’re partners,” she smiled slightly. “But he says that he loves me, so I must care about him too.”

Quirin nodded and looked out the window as the train started to roll. Kylo relaxed a little once they were moving and closed his eyes.

“Can I go look around?” Quirin asked. “I don’t see any of the bad guys here.”

“Just don’t go too far,” he nodded.

The boy hopped out of his seat and started exploring the car. Kylo sighed, closing his eyes. If he could just sleep for a few hours, he’d feel better. Or at least he should.

“Are you going to sleep?” She asked.

He nodded. “Just for a couple of hours.”

“Can I ask you something first?”

“Sure.”

“I…I still don’t know how much we’ve shared with one another, since none of this makes sense. But just how well do you know me?” she asked, softly.

“You…you love the beach. You told me once that you hated math in high school. I love the way you feel and act. It’s easy to talk to you. You moved here as a teenager because your parents were trash, so it made you happy to be away. I know what happened, when you were attacked, and hate that I can’t change that. You like having the back of your neck kissed when we make love,” he stroked her hand. “You’re beautiful and talented and I’ve never felt this way about anyone before. I’m not very good at relationships, but you’re so patient with me that I can’t imagine being with anyone else.”

“What happens if I die and it’s not today anymore?”

He was quiet.

“Kylo?”
“Then I wouldn’t want to go on. Not without you.”

She nudged him and he looked up at her. “You can’t say that. You have your career and your family…”

He shook his head. “No, I…Rey, when we talk to these families, and I see what they’ve lost, I can’t imagine having one day without you. I’m not strong enough. If today is the only day I get to have with you, that’s enough for me. We’ve had beautiful days and good memories. I don’t want a tomorrow without you.”

“Kylo…” she touched his face. “There are other, better, people than me out there. You have to give them a chance. You have to give yourself a chance to be happy.”

“I’m happy with you,” he took her hand and brought it to his mouth. “That’s why you have to live. This morning scared me. I’ve never woken up and felt this bad before. I don’t know what it means, but it’s not a good thing.”

With dejected eyes, she slowly nodded. “We’ll get through this.”

“Eventually.”

She tucked his hair behind his ear, kissed his forehead and softly whispered. “Go to sleep.”

Sleep would be good. His shoulders and throat had started to ache again and his head felt light. He settled his head back on her shoulder and tried to drift off. He didn’t dream, falling into a heavy sleep. He felt like he left his body for a while, floating in blackness. He woke up slightly when Quirin returned to tell them that he saw a deer. He rubbed his neck and blinked at the boy. Sleep came quickly to him again. He slept more, starting to actually feel somewhat near normal when he awoke the second time. They were softly talking; he kept his eyes shut to listen to them.

“…are you scared to die?”

“Quirin, you don’t have to worry about me. I have Kylo. He’s going to protect us. And I’m going to protect you.”

“I like Kylo. He’s cool. But it was scary when we got blowed up. It must have hurt you because it hurt me.”

“I…I don’t remember.”

“Kylo does. Is he sad that you and me might die?”

She sighed, her shoulder dipping. “He’s very worried about us. And he’s very tired today.”

“Cause you both got killed yesterday?”

“Yes, the bad man hurt us really bad.”

The boy’s feet were hitting the footrest below him in several small strikes. “I hope he gets better.”

“Me too.”

“He really likes you.”

“He told me, I know.”
They were quiet for a few minutes and Kylo took that chance to sit up. The room was still hazy, but the dull ache in his side had faded somewhat. He rubbed his face and Quirin waved at him. He smiled almost sadly at the boy. Their small section of the train looked blurry and he tried to refocus his eyes. He was starting to wonder if this day was a dream. They had escaped the city. They could just keep going. If they got away, everyone he cared about would be okay. He tried to shake off the feeling as he rubbed his neck again. Rey reached over to lightly massage his shoulders. He smiled at her gesture. At least she was starting to warm up to him today.

“Are we almost there?”

Rey nodded. “It should be in about fifteen minutes.”

“Hmm.” He stretched. “God, I needed to sleep.”

She moved her hand and gave him a small smile. Taking her hand again, he realised that they had to somehow get a phone to check in with the others. He still felt slightly groggy from napping, but didn’t feel like fainting whenever he thought about standing up. That was a good thing. If he could live through today, he would be almost back to normal. The conductor announced their arrival to the station and he winced at the crackling of the radio. He felt a sharp pain in his side and briefly closed his eyes.

“Are you okay?” Quirin asked.

“Yeah, it’s nothing. Just waking up,” he looked at Rey and she nodded, giving him another painkiller. He looked at Quirin and winked. “See? Medicine is good.”

He laughed. “I’m always good at taking medicine. It’s vegetables that I hate.”

“Vegetables are good. Carrots are good.”

“Yeah, I guess,” Quirin shrugged.

The brakes ground the train to a stop and they led the boy off. He happily swung from their arms, until Kylo felt the pain in his side burn up to his shoulder. Rey tapped Quirin lightly and he nodded. The station was busy, but there were no figures in black lurking after them. Kylo took a long breath, ignoring the pressure starting to build in his lungs; he needed to put it aside. He decided that they would leave him at his aunt’s before heading to his mother’s. He really didn’t look forward to talking to her, but there were some questions that I couldn’t really ask on the phone. And he needed to see that damned man.

“Quirin, is it okay that we leave you at your aunt’s? We have quite a bit of boring police work to do,” he asked as they stood outside the station, waiting for a taxi. “I also need to talk to my mom. And you know moms.”

“I love my mom, but she can be super boring. Especially today.” The boy shrugged. “It’s okay, I guess. My aunt has a PS4. But, he can’t find me here, right?”

“I don’t think so,” he replied, still unsure but tried to sound confident. “Have you ever been to your aunt’s before today?”

“Nope.”

“Then he doesn’t know where you are and can’t find you.”

“Then it’s cool.”
The weather in Albany was slightly cloudier than in the city. It was strange to be under a different sky. He hated Albany and visiting his mother. Rey noticed him gazing up at the clouds and touched his side. He looked at her and she looked slightly blurry before he focused again. He needed his glasses. He reached for his suit-jacket pocket and was happy to find that they were still there. She smiled lightly at him as the taxi arrived. He mainly thought through the rest of the day as they took the cab across the city. Quirin’s aunt lived in a moderately sized house he noted as they pulled up. The aunt was standing in her yard, walking her dog. She looked slightly surprised when they arrived, two cops and her nephew.

“Hi Auntie Britta!” Quirin greeted. “Can I go in and play PlayStation?”

She hugged him lightly and then pushed him towards the house. “Sure, Qui. Go in and I’ll talk to the detectives.”

Quirin ran inside, looking like he was at home again.

“Hello, we’re Detectives Rey Niima and Kylo Ren,” Rey extended her hand. “I’m sorry for dropping in on you like this.

“Mats called and said you’d be coming,” she shook her head. “Why would anyone be after Quirin?”

Kylo looked at her seriously. “We think that none of the children have been randomly taken. He targets them. It’s very important that he stays inside. These men are very dangerous and determined.”

She looked at them with wide eyes but nodded. “Of course, detective.”

“Can we say goodbye to him?” Rey asked.

“Yes, of course. Would you like some coffee or something?”

“No, we’ve…we’re on a bit of a schedule,” Rey said, noticing that he was unsteady on his feet again. He was staring at the grass, wondering how it could be so green.

“Quirin! We’re going!” Rey called as they entered the foyer. He waved at them from the television on the wall.

He was happily playing a video game in the living room. Despite how he felt, Kylo was slightly reluctant to leave him, but they had a long day ahead of them. He was ignoring the deep and strange pain that was spreading through his body. Trying to focus on the day, he decided that he’d call the others from his mother’s. He was starting to feel nervous about seeing her again after having minimal contact over the last few years. It was a good feeling to have, since it distracted him from everything else. After returning to the cab, he blinked slowly. He was almost yearning for tomorrow, whether it be today again or not. He was drumming on the window of the taxi and Rey elbowed him softly.

“Are you worried about Quirin?”

“Yes, but also about my mother. I don’t really talk to her as much as I should. I haven’t really seen her that often since she moved here,” he shrugged, not mentioning the pain. “I still don’t know what to say to her. She had no answers yesterday.”

“You think he’s connected to your family?”
“Somehow. The last name he gave at the fundraiser is my mother’s father’s last name. My uncle is also named Skywalker. I don’t know that side of the family well, but she might know. It’s such a strange last name that anyone around here has to be related to me. Either he used it, not knowing that we would find out, or just gave it to mess with me.”

As he spoke, he noticed her reaching into her pocket to retrieve a tissue. She held it to his nose.

“It started bleeding again.”

“Well, that’s just great.”

They pulled up to his mother’s building and he held the Kleenex to his nose and sighed. He had already come to the conclusion that he was somehow slowly dying. This couldn’t be the last day. If he could make it until 2 a.m., then the day could reset. He tried to stand with confidence, but Rey still had to help him along. This was not good and he couldn’t tell her that he was starting to feel both better and worse at the same time. He also dreaded walking into his mother’s looking like this; she would not be impressed by his current state. He pressed the buzzer marked Organa Solo and shifted his weight from side to side, hoping to get feeling back to the rest of his body.

“Hello?” His mother’s voice crackled through the intercom.

“It’s me.”

“Me who?”

“It’s me, mom.”

“Mom who?”

Oh god dammit, not today mom. “It’s Kylo. Let us up.”

“Well, in that case, you might be my son, but using a stupid name,” she said, followed by the buzz of the door.

He looked at Rey and rolled his eyes. She looked at him and gave him a tight smile. They climbed the stairs to the second floor; he didn’t want to tell Rey how every step seemed to tear him up inside. He could deflect the pain by focusing on how annoying this encounter would be. As usual, his mother was waiting outside her door when they rounded the corner from the stairwell in the well-lit hallway. She saw him holding the bloodied tissue and shook her head.

“Did she punch you?”

“No, mom. Can we come inside?”

“Did you punch him? Did he have it coming?” She turned to Rey and extended her hand. “I’m Leia Organa Solo. You must be Rey. He sent me a text that he had a new partner who was some young go-getter. He must have been drunk because it was at 3 a.m.” Her voice sounded older and smokier. As if she was one to talk about random, drunk texts. “You can come in, since I don’t want my neighbours seeing him like this. I could get in trouble with the condo board.”

Her apartment hadn’t changed much since the last time he was there, but that must have been something like two years ago. He remembered that he dropped off a book he had borrowed. The meeting had been only a couple of minutes. He wiped at his nose and was happy to feel the bleeding had almost stopped. His mother muttered to herself, heading to the washroom for more tissues. She handed it to him and eyed the two of them.
“Mom, this is my new partner and your future daughter in law, Rey Niima.”

Rey rolled her eyes as Leia shook her head. “What are you even talking about, Ben?”

He shrugged, glad to feel a slow numbness spread through his body. His mother also looked greyer than the last time that he saw her. He spotted the cigarette carton on the counter and the empty bottle of red wine by the sink. He should really call her more often. “I’m having a bad day.”

“That’s obvious,” she motioned towards her kitchen table. “Sit down. You look like you were hit by a car.”

“Not today. This was getting crushed,” he sat down and sighed. The pain made it hard not to turn to his bitterness towards the day. He eyed the singular family portrait hanging across the room. It was from Christmas when he was five. Rey followed his eyes and raised her eyebrows. He managed a small smile at her. Today’s Rey had had so much to deal with; she deserved something lighter.

She sat across from him and nudged his foot. “Mrs Organa, we have some questions for you regarding the case of the murdered children that we’re working on.”

His mother looked at them both and frowned, leaning against the kitchen counter. “And you couldn’t ask over the phone?”

“It was an excuse to get out of town,” he said, slumping down in the chair to stretch out his legs. It felt so good not to be standing. Rey nudged him again and he sat up a little.

His mother eyed them both and then sat at the head of the table and then folded her arms. “Why would I know anything about the case?”

He removed the tissue and tried to sit up even more. Being near his mother made his shoulders want to stiffen. It was always about sitting up straight and being proper at official dinners, but at home, anything went. They went from official clothes to pyjamas at dinner. How did he even learn how to be an adult? He shook his head at the memory. “We have a lead on our suspect. He was using the Skywalker name. And Ben Kenobi is involved.”

Leia shook her head. He was certain she could hear the discomfort in his voice. “That’s a little upsetting.”

“Do you know who that might be?” Rey asked. “An older male relative?”

“Your father?” Kylo asked, staring intently at her. He wasn’t letting her get away with this now. He still didn’t believe what she told him the previous today.

Leia tilted her head, pulling her braid over her shoulder. She frowned, shaking her head. “No, that’s not possible.”

“Why? What aren’t you telling me? Isn’t he still out there?” Kylo pressed. No matter what she said, he had to catch her in the lie.

“No, not anymore,” she countered. “Luke tracked him down a couple of months ago. He…you know him, Kylo. He doesn’t work consistently, so he took a month and found our father and brought him home to us. He’s at a care home not to far from here.”

Kylo scrubbed his face and slammed his fist on the table. He thought he had something there and it fell apart again. First waking up injured, feeling like he was dying, and now this information. It was
pointless to come up here. He could just be back at home in bed, with her.

“Would he know who we could talk to?” Rey asked, reaching out to put her hand on Kylo’s, trying to pull him back into the moment. Why was she always so kind to him? “We’re running out of time.”

Frowning, his mother stood, turning away from them to grab the coffee can. That’s what she always did when she was nervous; she became an entertainer. It was what she was brought up to do. He still resented her for that. It was something she’d forced into him. She started filling the coffee maker. Kylo was instantly frustrated with her delay in the answer.

“Leia,” he said. “Tell us now.”

“Don’t use your cop voice on me, it won’t work,” she turned and glared at him. She turned on the coffeemaker and returned to the table. “I was a politician for too many years and you can’t get anything out of me with that. Look, Ben, he’s not in any real shape to talk much. Luke goes by quite a bit and he’s not getting any better. But we can go visit him, if it will make you feel better. But coffee first. Have some manners. And explain to me exactly what’s happening and why you’re here. And why you called Rey my future daughter in law.”

He mostly said it to get under his mother’s skin. But now he had to back it up. “We’re dating and she doesn’t remember.”

“Are you high right now?” She looked from Kylo to Rey. “Is he being serious?”

Rey sighed, looking at him and then turning away towards his mother. “I wish he wasn’t, but he’s serious. I…he’s never talked to me like this before. We haven’t been partners for not that long and suddenly, today, he’s hugging and kissing me. He’s talking to me like I’m a real person and just the way he looks at me…I can’t help but believe him. He thinks he’s living the same day over and over again. He’s chasing our killer, and I need to follow him. You should have seen him this morning. He looked even worse and refused to go to the hospital. I don’t know, Leia. He’s not been himself all day. We had to pick up a child who he claims was about to be murdered today and he also says I’m going to die today. My head hurts just thinking about all of this.”

Leia shook her head, moving to serve them coffee. He was again irritated by her robotic movements; she had been trained like this and it wasn’t really what she wanted to do. “It sounds like it’s been an interesting morning.”

Rey shook her head. “But it would be really helpful if we could talk to your father.”

“And Uncle Luke.”

Leia nodded, but also grimaced. “I can’t help you there. He’s in China right now. I dropped him off at the airport this morning.”

Kylo again clenched his hand into a fist. He’d forgotten that. What the hell was he doing there? “So we can’t get a hold of him?”

She sipped at her coffee mug. “Well, you can go to China.”

With sudden hope, he quickly looked at Rey, who shook her head. “We’re not going to China.”

“So, back to you dating your partner,” Leia continued, leaning forward and daring him to answer. “How’s it going?”
Kylo took a clink of coffee. “She dies every day, so that puts a strain on things.”

“When did you develop a sense of humour?” Leia smirked. “You almost sound like your father.”

He caught the serious look Rey was giving him and let his smile fade. “Actually, mom, it’s not getting any easier. At first, I thought I could just die too and there would be no damage. It worked the first few times, almost two weeks or more, but the last time, and even before that…I don’t know. I woke up and it felt like it had just happened. And I’m worried that will start happening to Rey too. We can’t stop him if we’re both…broken. I have to keep watching her die and I don’t know how much more I can take. Holding someone who’s bleeding to death in your hands…it stays with you. It hurts so damned much, every time. I know she doesn’t believe me, but I’ve fallen in love with her. I’ve been doing this for almost twenty days now and I’m starting to worry that I can’t solve this case and I’ll run out of time. If I’m not around, then he’ll just keep killing her. And more children. I thought I had something with the name, but it’s just another dead end.”

His mother sat back and sighed. “Of all of the problems you’ve had, this is at the top of the list. So, if you are living through the same day, you know what’s going to happen. But obviously, you don’t have enough clues. So, when did the name Skywalker come up?”

“At the Kenobi fundraiser last night or…tonight. Today. Whenever. We were at his table before and he said that Skywalker was supposed to be there, but wouldn’t show up when he saw my name on the guest list. That’s why we went back last night and…messed it up. That Holdo woman shot us…then he dropped a chandelier on us. That was a change...” he said. He adjusted his glasses, trying to sit up again and not slouch. His mother hated slouching.

“So you met Ben Kenobi? I met him just before we got married, good lord that was a lifetime ago. He always seemed to be around. Luke…Luke loved him before they drifted apart. You were actually named after him. He was...there when you were a baby, before he got busy.” Leia finished her coffee and nodded. “You think that stopping him, this killer, will stop whatever’s happening to you?”

“Yes,” he nodded. He was mixing up the days, trying to remember everything else Kenobi had told them but he couldn’t get a clear thought. Dammit, why couldn’t Rey remember? “Not just for me. But we need to get him for the families of those children.”

She sighed. “And protect your partner girlfriend.”

“I have quite a few things to do today,” he nodded, looking at Rey out of the corner of his eye. She was sipping her coffee cup, seemingly pretending that today was just a normal day. “I’d really like to go talk to your father now.”

She looked up at the clock and shook her head in agreement. “Fine. I’ll take you. But you’re probably not going to get much out of him.”

“Something is better than nothing,” he stood a little too fast and reached to grab for the table for support. Pain shot up his side again and he hunched over, trying to get his head together. Rey moved to his side and frowned at him, gripping his hip.

“I thought you were feeling better,” she sighed. “You should rest again.”

“No, I’m fine,” he blinked. “I’ll be better tomorrow.”

His mother shook her head. “Maybe Rey and I should go alone.”

He shook his head, gripping Rey’s hand. “No. We don’t split up.”
She looked at him with concerned eyes, but grabbed her car keys. He leaned into Rey, still trying to straighten his back. He hated their eyes on him. He must had looked as bad as he felt; and he also hated wearing his glasses. His mother gave him a serious look, but then her lips quirked. “Well, at least I got to see you before you drop dead.”

“I…I’m sorry about that, mom.”

“I know you are. Let’s go.”

He leaned away from Rey, determined to show them that he wasn’t a total wreck. His mother looked from her to him and then shrugged, not willing to argue in front of a stranger. He was able to walk by himself down the hall, thankful that she could hold her tongue for a few minutes, but Rey was still tense at his side. He kept forgetting that she didn’t remember their previous conversations. In the elevator down to the garage, he took a few more steadying breaths. It was strange to be out of the city. If he wasn’t feeling this bad, he might actually think it was another day. Maybe they should just stay in Albany. Quirin was safe. Rey was safe. He could sleep on his mother’s couch and Rey would be alive. Would that stop the day?

He had to roll his eyes when he saw the car. “You still have that?”

“What? It still runs.”

Rey scanned the parking garage. “Are you talking about the silver car?”

“It was my father’s car and it’s falling to pieces,” he shook his head at the 1962 Pontiac GTO that sat in the mostly empty garage. He remembered taking many rides in that car and tried to shake off his father’s voice as he looked at it. “I thought that we sold that.”

“Oh, I could never do that,” she smiled. “We sold my car. I always hated it.”

He started to feel unsteady again but refused to let them see it. His mother made him sit in the small backseat, so he was forced to sit in the middle, long legs spread out in the small car. He began to feel tired again the minute he sat down but he tried to focus on his mother’s driving. She didn’t do this car justice. The drive seemed to take too long. When the world came back to him, he heard that his mother was chatting to Rey about what he was like as a child. Rey would make odd glances over her shoulder, smiling lightly at him. There was no way she was meeting his mother again.

They pulled up to a dull looking retirement-home complex. Leia tapped on the wheel of the car. “I’m going to stay here. Go in and ask to see Anakin Skywalker. They’ll show you to him.”

“Why don’t you want to come in?” Rey asked, unbuckling her seatbelt.

She looked solemn. “You’ll see when you get in there.”

Rey met his eyes and frowned, but still nodded. He looked sadly at his mother before exiting the car, moving carefully behind Rey’s seat. Every bump on the road had made him feel odd but he still pulled his suit jacket down and tried to look professional. Rey followed him into the building. Instantly, it was cold and the air smelled sterile; it was like life had been left outside the door, replaced by lingering death. An elderly man dragged by in a wheelchair, leading himself with one foot. Kylo shuddered.

“I wonder how they found him,” he mumbled, approaching the front desk.

“We’ll ask her once we’re done.”
The front desk worker smiled at them, setting down her knitting. “Who are you here to see today?”

“My grandfather, Anakin Skywalker.”

“Oh. Okay. He doesn’t get many visitors,” she nodded, her face falling slightly. “Do you have some ID? I’m sorry to ask, but we need to just check these things.”

“We’re NYPD detectives, from the city. But here on personal business.” He tried to soften his jaw and showed her his badge. Rey copied him, still looking at him with worry.

“Oh, wow. Okay. He’s…he’s having a good day, actually. I’ll show you to his room.”

There were more elderly people dozing in wheelchairs in the white, artificially-lit hallway. He carefully counted how far it was to the exit, nervous about being indoors in a semi-public space. The artwork was dull and the occasional piece of furniture looked used; no one sat in them. Rey stepped closer to him, taking in their environment. He realised that he was breathing heavily and tried to steady it. He really hoped that this day would lead them somewhere, but he lost more optimism when they reached an open door. A sign was affixed to the wall by it: Anakin Skywalker. There was an empty space where a picture should be. He had never thought that often about his grandfather, but mostly remembered the arguments between his mother and uncle. The attendant motioned them to go in.

“He mostly sleeps, but he was awake earlier,” she shook her head. “I…you haven’t been here before, but he must have been burnt really bad, at some point. He has a great deal of scar tissue and internal damage. We still don’t know how and he won’t tell us. Sometimes he can speak, if you remove the oxygen mask. But it can’t be off for too long. I’ll come check on you in a few minutes.”

The gentle hiss and wheeze cycle of an oxygen machine filled the room when they stepped inside. Hiss-wheeze-silence. Repeat. The blinds were closed. Resting in an overly large white bed was a fragile old man, hooked up to the angry machine. His skin was pale on the spots that were not angry red scars. Rey reached for his hand and he squeezed it.

“Hi, Anakin. This Rey and…Ben. We’re here to see you,” he held her hand tighter as he stepped forward. “I…I’m Han and Leia’s son.”

The man opened his eyes and they fluttered lightly. But he nodded. Kylo pressed on.

“We…we have some questions about our family and…I’m sorry I didn’t know that you were here,” he looked at Rey. “I would have come to see you if I’d known.”

Again, the hiss-wheeze-silence cycle of the machine echoed around them. He cleared his throat, again feeling his chest tighten.

“We’re just…we’re detectives and we have questions about our family. Do you know anyone that might…hurt children?”

The old man shook his head. He felt awkward, mostly for Rey’s sake. Why had he dragged her here? He looked at the small, scarred, frail man and sighed. The only thing keeping him connected to the moment was her hand in his.

“I…I guess it was nice to meet you,” he mumbled, turning to go.

Then the old man lifted his mask and waved him to come closer. Rey nodded, pushing him to go on.
He smelt like a hospital. That’s all Kylo could think when he came closer. The man still made him come closer.

“I…Ben…”

“Yes?” He leaned in.

Suddenly, the old man grasped at his arm, seemingly finding a strength he didn’t expect. The constant snap-hiss of the machine was louder when he got closer. He leaned nearer and his grandfather grasped at his face.

“I’m…not…Anakin.”

“What?”

Kylo leaned down and the man whispered to him in a raspy voice. “His…half brother. Owen. He…did this to me. Tricked Luke and Leia a few months ago. He…looking for you. And the boy. Waiting for you. Ben, I…so sorry.”

“What are you talking about?” He managed to ask. The power cut out the second he started to pull away.

“Run.” The old man rasped. “Run, Ben.”

His mother. Rey. Quirin. No. He recoiled, reaching for her.

“What’s happening?” He heard her pulling out her gun. He was torn in three directions: the man without oxygen resting before them, his mother outside, and her. He needed to make a choice and he pushed her forward as the power flickered back on. They were shoved aside by the nurse attendants running in as Owen started to struggle with breathing. The lights flickered out again and he focused on guiding Rey forward, towards the light of the lobby. He needed to get to his mother. Fuck, what was he thinking?

Emerging outside, he saw his mother leaning, bored against the car. He met her eyes and had to shout at her for the first time since he was eighteen.

“Start the car! We need to go!” He yelled.

His mother scrambled for the keys and they heard sirens in the background.

“What’s happening, Ben?” She called as he pushed Rey into the backseat. There was no way that she was sitting in the front now.

“He’s not Anakin!” He said, closing the door. “Anakin is doing all this, Rey! It’s been him from the start!”

Rey was breathing deeply, still waiting for whatever he expected to happen. “What did he say to you?”

“He told me to run. Mom, we need to go check on Quirin. It…it’s the wrong time and there shouldn’t be a way that he’s following us but fuck, he’s been behind this all,” his gun was still resting on his knee. “Fuck!”

“Ben are you…?”

“Start the car, mom!”
Leia complied, pulling out of the parking lot. He needed the adrenaline to keep going. He reached for Rey’s hand and she grabbed it.

“Kylo are you…?”

“No, no Rey, I’m not okay. But we have to call Quirin’s aunt. Rey, you need to live through today….if I die, you need to listen to him. I’ll get him…to call you.” Pain shot up his side. He took a few struggled breaths and coughed into his hand. There was blood. He tried to wipe it on his pants without them noticing, but their sharp eyes locked on him.

“Rey? Here — call that boy’s aunt.” Leia called, turning away from him to give her the phone

“Rey?” He handed her the number, seeing his hand shake as he did.

She nodded, but looked at him with wide eyes.

“Hi, it’s Detective Niima again. How’s…how’s Quirin?” He could hear the distant answer on the other end of the line. She smiled and sighed, nodding. “So, no one has been by? All right. Just… just keep him inside. Thank you, ma’am.” She hung up the phone. “He’s fine. Nothing strange there. Do we…do we go get him?”

He shook his head. “That might just lead him to him. We need to go back to the city.”

His mother reached for him. “You’re not okay.”

“I’m dying, mom! And your father is the man doing this! Of course I’m not okay!” He forced himself to sit up. He met her eyes, challenging her. She just coldly met his, not saying anything. Rey cleared her throat.

“What now?” His mother gripped the wheel.

“Back to the city.” He slumped down again. “If he’s after us, let’s give him a chase.”

Rey was still shocked by his shouting, reaching to touch him. “Was he…do you think he knew we were there?”

He wanted to snap at her, but instead he fixed his gun and set it back in his holster. God, everything hurt. “Owen, he wouldn’t have said that if he wasn’t afraid. Let’s…let’s go back to the station. Talk to Poe. I’m…I…”

Rey gripped his shoulder. “It’s okay. Just…Leia’s driving. Rest now.”

He took a shaky breath and his head slumped against the window. He started to doze, ignoring the voices around him. He felt like he was back driving around with dad. He was four years old again, back in an old memory of being taken around in that stupid car. The world blurred out and he looked over and instead of his mother, it was his father sitting in the driver’s seat. He blinked and she slowly came into vision.

“I know you hate the hospital but…”

His eyes blinked open and he glared at her. “No! We…we’re going to the station, mom!” He managed to shout.

They were on the way towards the city. Despite how obvious the car was, it seemed like no one was following them.
“Fuck.” He said, letting his thoughts meet his mouth.

“Language, Ben,” his mother muttered, changing lanes.

“Sorry,” the world was blurring again. “I…I’m going to sleep again. Wake me up when we’re at the station.”

He passed out, hardly hearing Rey’s protest. He floated, lightly, above the car. His mother was looking back at Rey in the dead space. He saw himself looking pale. He needed to break this cycle; it was all too much.

He woke up again, feeling the car some to a firm stop and the engine turn off. Someone shook his shoulder lightly. He blinked, looking back at Rey. She didn’t deserve this.

“Kylo, we’re back,” she whispered.

“Okay,” he steadied his hands. “Mom, go home. Or go anywhere. Just…just stay away from us.”

“Ben, I’m not going anywhere without you,” his mother reached out and touched his leg. “Let me help you.”

He must be severely ill because he actually considered it. But eventually he shook his head.

“Mom, please. I can’t…I can’t protect everyone. Go home and look up everything you can about Anakin. Go through any documents you have. Find out his connection to Ben Kenobi. Break into Luke’s house — and I know you know how to break into places — and see what he has. Mom, we have our suspect. Now we need to find him,” he said as he looked firmly at her and Leia eventually sighed and nodded.

“That’s actually a good idea.”

“Call us at the station when you find something.” He opened the car door and stepped out. His legs still felt rubbery, but it was better than before. Rey climbed out after him, lightly saying goodbye to his mother. She helped him towards the station and her car pulled away. He kept waiting for the truck to scream out of nowhere and destroy her, but there was nothing.

“What time is it?” He asked.

“Just after five.”

“There’s too many hours to this day,” he mumbled and started towards the station door.

Rey was close by his side as they went inside. Again, he headed back up to the lab.

Again, Poe looked at him with a shocked expression. “Well, you don’t look any better.”

“Funny, I feel great,” he leaned against the wall. “How did this morning go?”

“Other than the fact that we couldn’t get a hold of you two and my assistant has flaked on me, it went pretty well. Elias is safe. Finn called here when he couldn’t reach you guys and said that he got the homeless dude and the bomb,” Poe shrugged. “After that, I actually just did my job.”

“Look, I need you to find a way to search the Shiny database and find the medical connection to the children,” he shook his head. “Can you do that?”

Dameron leaned back. “Yeah, we have access to that. What are you looking for?”
“We…we’re going to go over the case files. The parents I’ve talked to have something to do with medicine,” he removed his glasses and rubbed his face. “Rey, go get the files. We’ll look through them here.”

“Why here?”

Kylo shrugged. “Furtherest from the front door.”

When she was gone, he let out a long groan. He couldn’t let her see him in so much pain.

“You really don’t look good, man,” Dameron turned, helping guide him to an office chair.

“Yeah, I think that I’m dying. It hurts to move and breathe…the doctor this morning maybe said something about internal bleeding. But she can’t know how bad it is. I need her to do the work that I can’t do today. I just need to make it to 2 a.m. and the day will reset. If I don’t die today, then hopefully everything will be back to normal,” he closed his eyes and sighed.

“What if it doesn’t reset? And you're stay dead?”

He rubbed the back of his neck. “Yeah, I…I’ve been thinking about that too. I think that it might break the loop. You guys have all of this evidence and we’ll have more once we connect the kids. Then…you solve the case. And take care of her.

He slowly scanned the lab, remembering his early comment.

“Is your assistant sick again today?”

He nodded. “Yeah, she’s been flaky all morning, complaining when I took off.”

“She was sick yesterday too…” he frowned. Rey returned and he sat up a little and smiled lightly at her. She sighed as she looked at him. He shook his head, frowning. “Poe, the database. Can you check and see if they have anything in common?”

He stood and stretched. “Yeah, let me go check. Try to do some work around here while I’m gone. Just pick a pile. There's a million of them.”

Rey started going through the files in chronological order. “So, who have you talked to?”

“We met with the Dyas family and the Billabas yesterday. Or today,” he scanned through the birthdays. “So the thing with the 24th is out the window, look.”

“William Koth, Adam Trebor and Elizabeth Koon weren’t born on the 24th,” she scanned more. “Neither was Ashley Nu and Trevor Rancisis.”

“We would have noticed the dates before if they had.”

“Hmm,” she thought. “I’m going to call the Koth’s. I have an idea.”

Finding the contact information, she went to use Poe’s office phone in the corner. She stared at the picture of the boy as she called his parents.

“Hello, Mrs Koth? This is detective Rey Niima from the NYPD. We’re…we’re following some leads about your son’s case,” she nodded, glancing up at Kylo. “Yes, ma’am. It’s…it’s been a very hard case and I’m sorry for your loss. I have some questions that I hope you can answer. I…I see that Will’s birthday is February 2nd. Was that your due date? It…it’s okay. I’m sorry for asking
you all of this. Okay. My notes are a little incomplete. What line of work is your husband in? Oh, that…that sounds like a lot of work. I really appreciate you taking my call. All right. Bye.”

She looked up at Kylo, grinning as she hung up the phone. “He was due on January 24th. And her husband is an EMT.”

He wanted to hug her, but then scowled. “How did we miss all this before?”

“There were too many children and everyone was panicked,” she shook her head. “Give me the numbers to the other families.”

He moved to hand her the files and winced as he crossed the room. Rey eyed him, but didn’t say anything. He started making a new list of the names, including the new details that they now had. Doctor, nurse, pharmacist, EMT…each of the children had a parent that was in medical care. He hadn’t figured out what it all meant, but he was getting closer. He heard Rey end another call and she nodded again.

“Adam Trebor’s mother is a midwife. And he was due on the 24th, but he’s a twin and they were born six weeks premature,” she said and he noted it next to the boy’s name.

“This is good. This is really good.”

She smiled again. They went through the other names and it all started to look clearer. There was a panicked moment when the mother to the Rancisis child said they didn’t work in medicine, until she mentioned that her ex-husband, the boy’s father, was a surgeon.

Poe returned when they were going over their list again. He held up a couple pages of a printout from the database. “You guys want this now? I need to get something to eat before I collapse.”

“Yeah, we should take a break. But I want to see that first,” he reached for the pages.

“It was nothing we looked for before,” Dameron said. “We were too busy looking for other connections, who might know who, that sort of stuff.”

He scanned the printout. “What does this mean?”

“They all had something called Macht-Vis Disorder. It’s very rare, but from what I read, it affects kids between the ages of one and three. Signs show up after birth. Since these kids are all between eight and ten, it’s been a number of years since they had symptoms. The lining of the lungs is messed up, but once it’s diagnosed, it’s a fairly easy treatment to keep it from getting inflamed and causing any scar tissue. It sounds like they go through something like chemo and then it’s good as new,” Poe leaned against his lab table. “Those are all your kids, right?”

Kylo nodded. “It looks like all of them. But then there are previous cases. Do we know what happened to these other kids?”

He shook his head. “I didn’t have time to check.”

Kylo flipped the page, scanning the names. “Rey.”

“What?”

He pointed to the paper. “Look.”

She scanned down and gasped. “Solo, Ben, born 1984.”
“I had this.”

Poe shrugged. “It’s genetic.”

Kylo flipped to the last page, going back even further. He didn’t spot his father’s name and frowned.

“There aren’t any records from further back?”

He shook his head. “No, they’re still inputting older records. But this is just for New York state. There haven’t been that many other cases.”

“And since these parents are all involved in medicine, they would have noticed anything strange with their children, and would also have been more than willing to submit their records,” he shook his head. “And how he found them. Can anyone access this?”

Poe was flipping through a take-out menu. “Nope. It’s just for health care providers. And well, us. But the database is new. Before that, you’d have a hard time finding anything remotely this organised.”

“There are other names on this list, other children that haven’t been taken,” he looked at Poe. “If anything happens, you need to warn them.”

“What would happen?” Rey asked, glancing from him to Dameron. “Kylo, why would Poe have to warn them?”

He bit his lip and cringed. “Rey I…”

“Maybe you should eat something? Ever think of that?” Dameron tossed the menu at him.

“That’s probably a good idea,” Rey crossed her arms. “Let’s take a break. It’s been…a long day.”

They let Dameron order and he asked Rey to help him to the crash room. It was good to sit somewhere other than the lab chair. Rey sat down opposite to him.

“You said that you were dying to your mother,” she frowned. “Did you mean that?”

He took a deep breath. “I really…Rey, I have to make it to 2 a.m. That will reset the day and I’ll be fine again. Don’t look so worried.”

“I can’t help it,” she shook her head. “Kylo, what do you think all of this means? You have these injuries that you can’t explain, or at least the explanation sounds insane. We have the name of the killer, but we still don’t know where he is. And he’s…he’s related to you.”

“Hopefully, my mother will find something,” he shrugged, resting against the wall. “Rey, I can’t protect you today. I’m so sorry.”

“I…I know,” she checked her watch and pursed her lips. “I only have about another four hours to live.”

“Come here,” he reached for her. She shifted to sit next to him. He rested against her and rubbed her knee. “It…we did it Rey. We have all of the details. We can stop running around now. This day has to end eventually. We’ll find him, and end this. The benefit has started now. He will be there, but without Holdo. Since we’ve stopped her, I think. We need to talk to Ahsoka again, maybe. Find out how mad he was.”
“I should go talk to her.”

“You can’t go alone. We can call.”

There was a quick knock at the door and Poe popped his head in. “Hey, food’s here.”

“Good,” he stood. He was able to walk on his own and that felt good for the few steps it took to get to the break room. He only had a slight appetite, but was happy to watch Rey eat. His phone started to buzz and he blankly looked at the number.

“Mom, are you okay?”

“Never better. Just going through some old documents,” she said, then he heard her sigh. “You still sound awful.”

“Have you found anything? About him? Or Kenobi?”

“No, nothing yet. But there might be this old chest from my mother. I haven’t been able to find it yet. I’ll keep looking.”

He inwardly screamed. They didn’t have time for this.

“Thanks. Keep looking.”

“Okay, okay. I’ll call again. Try to get some rest, okay?”

He hung up again without saying goodbye.

“What’s wrong?” Rey asked.

He was angry: at his mother, at the man hurting other people, and all of the evil in the world. He wanted to leave the room. He needed to think. Shaking his head at her, he stood up and instantly felt faint. Swaying, his vision blurred. He saw the world tip over and her panicked eyes before everything went black.

Beeping.

Faint beeping.

His ears were ringing as the beeping became clearer.

Things were blurry when he opened his eyes. The dull tones came from a machine, along with the sound of oxygen being pumped. There was a dull pain in his arm from an IV. When he was able to focus, he saw Rey sitting at his bedside. He was in the hospital. No.

“You…you fainted. At the lab,” she said, smoothing his hair. “Kylo, this is really serious.”

He nodded, fiddling with the tube in his nose. “Rey, Rey, take this off. We need to go.”

“No,” she shook her head, her eyes red. “Kylo. They can’t stop the bleeding.”

“I know,” he nodded. “What time…?”

“11.40.” She said, blankly.

“11.40 at night? On Tuesday the 24th?”
She frowned. “Yes.”

“Shit. You have to go. Go. Run. Hide. Do something. If I die, you have to stop them,” he grabbed at her hand. He also thought about ripping out the IV and making a run for it. “Talk to Quirin. He knows parts of the loop.”

“There’s nowhere to go, Kylo. I’m staying with you,” she gently squeezed his hand. “You should have gone to the hospital from the start.”

“But we did it. We have how they’re connected and how he found them. We know that they are in the loop, and that he’s after Palpatine and Kenobi,” he looked at the lights above him, watching them slightly swirl. “Maybe this is where it ends. This is the last day. You have to live, Rey. Run, get away.”

Tears slipped down his cheeks and she gently wiped them away, shifting to kiss him. “I can’t.”

She gestured at her other arm, cuffed to his bed.

“No, no!” He tried to sit up, fighting the rush of pain through his body. “We’ll break your hand. I know how to do it.”

She just sadly shook her head. “He was waiting for you to wake up.”

She glanced at the door and it swung open. Wearing a white lab coat, was the man from the ballroom. His yellow eyes narrowed at him, set in an aged but still-elegant face.

“Good to see you’re awake, Ben,” the man said, gesturing at the chair across from the bed. “May I sit down?”

Kylo just glared, looking around the room for anything to attack him with.

“Do you know who I am?”

“Anakin Skywalker.”

“Good. Glad we got that cleared up. Now we’re going to have a conversation. She gets to stay because, well, I’m going to kill her soon. And she won’t remember it anyway,” he smiled, taking a long look at Rey. “That’s the beauty of the loop, my dear.”

“Let her go,” Kylo said, gripping Rey’s hand as he took a few laboured breaths.

“No, not just now,” Anakin sat back, stretching his hands behind his head. “I’m just about done with them. I’ve waited so long to destroy them and now it’s almost time for us to move on to tomorrow. But I have a little problem: You.”

He sat up again, looking at them both. Rey had firmed her face, refusing to cry, but her hand was gripping Kylo’s hard. He was taking small, quick breaths. He didn’t say anything to the taunt and only locked his eyes on the other man’s.

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“Do you have any questions about all of this? How is this possible? Why I’m doing all this?” He smirked, toying with them. “You’re smart. I think that you’ll understand.”

Kylo just shook his head. He had questions but he refused to be intimidated by this man.

“Oh, Ben. Come on. We won’t get out of this if you won’t ask questions,” he stood and reached for Rey who quickly pulled her hand from Kylo to push him away, taking a swing at him. He stepped
back, raising his greyed eyebrows at her. “She’s very lovely, Ben. It’s been fun to have her killed all of these days. It will be even more fun to break you with her.”

Rey squeezed her eyes shut and returned her hand to Kylo. She clutched at him, refusing to look at the man behind her. Her face was firmed into a harsh look, her eyes burning when she looked at him. Anakin placed his hands on her shoulders.

“Now, isn’t that better?”

A silent tear slipped down her cheek. Trapped by his dying body, there was nothing he could do. Inwardly, he raged.

“There are three ways for this to end, Ben. Either you join me, kill me, or you give me your life so I can end this day,” he patted Rey’s head and she flinched.

“You’ve already killed me,” Kylo finally said. “I’ve already died.”

The older man sighed, looking annoyed.

“Why do you think it takes me so long to end the day with the children? They die every day in the loop. Don’t think that they only die once. The world is not that kind. They take some… convincing.” Anakin pulled out a syringe from his pocket, holding it to Rey’s neck. “It’s almost midnight. Time to say goodbye.”

“Please,” he begged. “Please don’t do this.”

“I gave you a choice that first day, Ben. Him or her. You keep choosing wrong,” he shook his head. “Not a very good cop. Just like your father.”

He quickly jabbed the needle into her neck and she gasped as he emptied it. Her breathing quickened as she looked at him, fear etching her features. A pained sob escaped his lips.

“Now, she’s going to go to sleep and not wake up,” he shrugged, stepping away. “But you’re going to wake up tomorrow. Most of all this will be…better. I’d really recommend not dying that many more times. Or else the fun is over for everyone. But we’ll see if you survive the next today because I will make you understand the power that you’re refusing. See you soon.”

And then he stalked out of the room without another word.

Rey was blinking, touching her neck. Her mouth hung open, feeling whatever he had given her spread throughout her body. “Kylo…what are you…what are we going to do?”

He reached up, lightly brushing his hair. “We’re going to stop him. Rey, I love you. I’m so sorry for today.”

Her breathing quickened and she nodded.

“Don’t let me die alone, Kylo,” she mumbled, echoing the first day. The memory tore up what was left of his resolve and he leaned back, letting himself cry angry, burning tears. She looked at him sadly, almost confused at why he was doing it. Her eyes lost focus and she reached out for him, wailing lowly. He grasped her hand, wishing she could be on the bed with him. Instead, she was locked in place, tied to her fate.

After meeting his eyes for one last time, she slowly put her head on the bed and her breathing slowed. She slipped away and he was helpless, staring at the buzzing lights above him. He held her
hand until he couldn’t feel a pulse, before finally falling asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Ahhh! I'm loving how people keep leaving comments. Things will get dark(er) from here on. Thanks for hanging in there with me!
Day 20

Chapter Summary

The darkest day. Please read the tags.

Chapter Notes

Basically skip this chapter if anything in the tags ANYTHING might get to you. I'm really, really sorry. We needed to go to a dark place before we can return to the light.

Day 20

Kylo was in less pain than the previous day once he shivered and jolted awake. Not dying felt good, but there were still ghost memories nagging at his body. He felt better now that the distinct dying sensation had subsided. Other than the pain in his heart, he felt more normal. Whatever normal felt now, anyway. For the most part, he could move without much discomfort. He stretched his arms above his head and arched his back. If he could avoid dying today, he guessed that he would feel even better the next day. The not dying part would always be a problem. He glanced at the clock. 5.48. Fine, a little early. He could work with that.

Anakin’s words echoed in his ears and he tried not to shudder. How much more could he take? He’d given him three choices. One of them was out of the question; he’d never join with that man. The second one was something he’d have to consider in his darkest hours: he’d die for her and die for the children. If it came to that, he’d do it. But, he knew what he wanted to choose. He was going to kill the man.

But then there was the looming threat to break him. These wouldn’t be easy days, but he was going to hunt the man down and kill him.

He got out of bed and put the water on for tea, because it was something to do and it felt normal. He watched the water starting to boil and let his eyes blur. Feeling mostly empty, he walked towards his door as the radio clicked on.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”

Opening the door, he was expecting more of a surprise. Instead it was just Finn, looking at him with shocked eyes.

“Good morning,” he said with a small smile. “I think you have a letter for me?”

“Whoa, hey. How did you know I would be out here, man?” The other man asked, looking at his open palm.
“I’m not having a very good morning,” he shook his head. “Look, this is going to be a very long day. Come inside and sit down. I’ve got some calls to make. At some point, a crow is going to hit the window, but it always does that, so just ignore it.”

He slowly stepped inside and looked at him with raised eyebrows. He watched Kylo walk into the kitchen, finishing the tea as he made his first call.

“Yeah, Niima.”

She was alive again. He took a shaky breath.

“Hey.”

“Kylo? What’s wrong?”

“You don’t even want to know. Can you come by my apartment as soon as you can? We’ve got a problem and you need to get off the street,” he watched his balcony door, waiting for his usual suicidal guest.

“What are you talking about?”

“Just…please come here. I need to talk to you.”

“Sure, send me the address.”

He hung up and quickly texted her. He had started the call to Dameron when the bird hit his window.

Finn jumped, his head snapping from the dead bird back to him.

He shrugged. “I told you.”

“Maybe you should put a sticker on the window or something if that’s always happening,” Finn eyed him.

He rolled his eyes as Poe answered. “Yeah, it’s Dameron. And it’s too early. What’d you want?”

“Do you even have a home? You’re always there so early,” he asked, the previous days coming back to him.

“I live for my work. Is this Ren? What’s with the questions?”

“Look, I need your help with something. Can you come by my place?”

“What? Wait, just wait,” he heard him cover the phone and talk to someone. He exhaled harshly. This wasn’t how the conversation usually went. “Sorry about that. Bebe is having some sort of crisis. Why would I need to come by your place?”

Anakin’s threat pressed on his mind. “I don’t actually think that there’s time for that now. Whatever you were planning with your nephew, Elias, you need to go now. I know what your sister has in mind, but I think that someone else might be after him too. You need to go now and keep him safe. Leave your phone. I’ll find a way to get a hold of you later.”

The other man took a long, deep breath. “Are you…are you sure? I mean, what the hell, Kylo.”

“I am sure. Poe, you won’t believe me, but I’ve been living through the same day. I know
something will happen to your nephew today if you don’t go get him and drop him at his father’s. Your sister is up to something,” he wished he could explain more, but any changes to the day made his heart race. “You need to go now.”

He heard a knock at the door and went to answer it. Rey was thankfully on the other side, looking whole and healthy but also confused.

“Oh, yeah. Sure. I’ll call you later.”

Shit, he would have to bring his phone. But if he had just been following previous loops, then maybe it wasn’t the phone or the card. What if they had tried all of these things before? But why would he run, hide, or take her to the beach on days that weren’t the loop? Fine. He’d have to figure that out later.

Rey was eyeing him as he swore at his phone, looking from Finn to him. She softly waved at him and then focused on her partner. “Are you okay?”

“I don’t feel like I’m dying anymore, so that’s better,” he smirked at her confusion. “And you’re here, so that’s also better. But we have a serious problem and I need your help.”

“What…what’s happening to you?”

“You’ve happened to me,” he smirked, warm feelings rising in his tired chest and spilling out of his mouth. “Rey, you’ve happened to me.”

She blinked, hazel eyes perplexed.

How could he explain this to her without sounding nuts? Maybe the solution was just to dip into the pool of insanity.

“Okay, so, there’s another thing that’s happening. I know who the killer is — he’s my grandfather and he’s making this personal. I’m living the same day, over and over again. He’s created some sort of time loop, using the children to get what he wants from the DA and the man running against him, Kenobi. They both know my family and he’s…he’s going to kill you to try to break me. He wants something from me and I need your help to get through this day and not lose my mind,” he reached for her hand and she looked down, then met his eyes again. “Please.”

“I…okay. You’re my partner, and I trust you,” she shook her head, still not looking fully convinced but starting to swallow his tale. It was a start, at least. “What do we do now?”

“You need to get changed. And then we start the day.”

“Are you…are you really glad that I’m here?”

“Yes,” he nodded. “Having you near me, makes me feel less nervous. I have seen so many things and I believe him when he said that he’s going to try to break me. I’m worried about our friends. And my mother.”

Finn cleared his throat. “What am I supposed to do?”

Kylo turned and met his eyes. “I need you to go stop a homeless man. He’s got a bomb and he’s the easiest part to solve.”

He scribbled down the time and the address on a notepad on the coffee table. He handed it to Finn and nodded. He wrote his phone number beside it.
“Just be careful,” he said. “I’m going to give you my reserve weapon. I hope you won’t have to use it, but he’s coming for us.”

“Your grandfather?”

“Yes.”

“This is messed up.”

He retrieved the gun, catching his reflection in the mirror. He looked tired, and he could almost swear that his eyes were not their normal brown; they were lighter somehow. This was not going to be a good day. He gave the gun to Finn and again he tucked it into his trousers. He nodded at him. Rey was still in her running clothes, looking out the window, her arms folded. How could he put her through all of this again?

“Finn, you should get going.”

He nodded at him and Rey and quietly left. He joined her by the balcony, putting his arm around her waist.

“What’s this?” She eyed him, but didn’t shift away.

“This is me trying to tell you that we’re in real danger,” he shook his head. “All of these days, everything I’ve tried, I’ve only put you in more trouble and pain. I know all of this sounds unbelievable, but I’ve fallen in love with you. It’s hard, Rey, because every day, you die. He finds you and either him or one of his accomplices does it. We’ve had beautiful moments, but also horrible ones. I’m sorry that I brought you into this. But we will get through this, one day. Soon.”

“You…this all sounds insane,” she shook her head. “I die? All the time? How is that possible?”

She turned, facing him. He tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and sighed. She stilled against his hand, her jaw firming at how close he stood. He was pushing her too hard already, on his toes from the slight changes. Poe wasn’t there, the team wasn’t there. He needed to stop and breathe and he didn’t have time for that.

“We need to call Quirin, the boy who’s in today’s loop. He knows where he gets taken, but we still haven’t figured out where that is,” he frowned. “There’s something special about him. He’s using the children to drive the loop and get what he wants from the DA’s office. Holdo is working with him too. She poisoned us once and then she shot us. There’s so many things that can go wrong and I’m having trouble keeping it straight at this point.”

She nodded. “I have a friend…”

“Rose.”

She smirked. “Yeah.”

“She needs to stop her from doing anything. We need to get dirt on her and what she’s up to,” he nodded. “And Anakin will show up at the courthouse at some point, along with one of his accomplices. He’s got people everywhere and I only know some of the parts. The guy that met Finn this morning, I think it’s some assassin he’s brought in. It’s…this is complicated.”

“That’s why you need my help. Let’s get this straight.” She motioned to the couch. “Take a breath. Tell me what we need to do.”
He sat down, taking her hand. She looked like she always did, alive and focused. He still felt her dead against him from the previous day. This was never going to get easier. If they could stop him today, then he would finally be able to move on. He stroked her fingers, feeling the way that her hand sat in his.

“Okay, so here’s how the day usually goes: I talk to the three of you first, then you contact Rose. Warn her about the red-headed man who will show up, along with that bitch ADA Holdo. I also think she needs to be more careful this time. I’ve met him now; I know what he wants. I need to call the Jinns and get that part sorted out. There are so many hours in this day and I’m so tired. I’m tired of playing his game,” he shook his head. “I was near death yesterday. And I’m beginning to mix up the days; I can’t remember the order anymore. It used to work to write things down, but now that just feels like too much. There aren’t that many days left if I die again.”

“You can die? How does that work?”

He shrugged. “In the beginning, it was just something that happened. I’ve…I’ve taken my own life. It feels strange to say. I’m sitting here, now, looking at you, but I’ve died. I…I couldn’t handle losing you. I’ve been selfish and stupid and not very good at staying sane. I know you now and it makes me realize how stupid I was before, mistreating you. You’ve died, every day. I can’t stop it, and it’s eating me up inside. I know that you’re trying to believe me, and I…appreciate it. I care about you so much and you…you have to deal with it. Because all of this is insane.”

She rubbed his leg, taking in his words. He saw her mind starting to work and she stood. “I…I’m going to go get changed.”

She left him alone and he took a deep breath. He replayed the conversation he had with Anakin back at the hospital. The children must have died so many times before he came into the loop. His heart felt heavy at all of the days that he must have forgotten; he must depend on that to break people down. Forcing people to forget must take just as much energy as making them remember.

Rey emerged from his bedroom, fixing her ponytail. “Are you okay?”

He stood, taking her hands. Why was she letting him touch her? “I don’t know anymore. It’s hard not to be afraid for you and the children. I don’t understand why he hates them and hates me. He’s like no one I’ve ever met before; something has died in him and there’s no way to reason with someone like that.”

She nodded. “I think I’m starting to understand. He wants something and you are in his way. We deal with people like that all the time. But, if it’s family…that makes it hurt even more.”

“I’ll have to talk to my mother at some point today. She has to know.”

“What about your father?”

“He died. It was a long time ago, but I’ve been thinking about him more and more. He was a cop and I…I hated him when he died. But now I just wish I could talk to him again,” he shook his head. “I didn’t realize how alone I felt until I found you.”

She crossed her arms. “It’s not fair that you remember and I can’t.”

“I’m almost starting to get used to it,” he reached for her and she slowly stepped into his arms. She was still keeping her distance from him and he had to give her space. But it was hard, not knowing when it would all be taken from them.

“Can I kiss you?” He asked. “You can say no.”
She looked from his hand to his lips. Slowly she nodded, and he leaned down to brush her lips. She looked up at him with half-shut eyes as he stepped back.

“An hour ago, I’d never think that this would be happening,” she shook her head. “How are you doing this?”

“I told you, I know you now,” he sighed, resting his hand on her hip. “Rey, today won’t be easy. I don’t know how much this means to you, but I hate myself for making you sad and frustrated before. Yesterday for you couldn’t have been a good day.”

“Well, now we have today. Let’s live in this day,” she met his eyes. “Look, I still don’t understand all of this. You’re a different person, I can see that. You’re talking to me like I’m a person and that…Kylo, I needed that.”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

“Stop apologizing,” she smiled again. “Don’t you have some calls to make?”

Smirking, he stepped away, dialling the Jinn house. Again, he had to warn them not to go to the park and to leave town. Just not to Albany. Rey watched him as he spoke and angled her head towards him, giving a small smile. This was how they should have worked from the start, if he hadn’t been so focused on making life hell for her. Kristina seemed to understand and he hung up the phone.

“Let’s go to work.”

He pulled on his suit coat, wishing he had changed his clothes, but he would rather have spent the time with her. He was going to burn this outfit if he ever woke up and it was tomorrow. They were waiting for a taxi when his phone buzzed. An unfamiliar number was calling him. This would not be good news.

“Hey, Kylo. I have…I have a problem,” Dameron sounded slightly panicked.

His stomach fell. “What’s wrong?”

“I…I have Elias but…here, she wants to talk to you.”

She?

“Hello, detective,” the voice of his assistant, Octavius, came on the line. Her voice turned into a deep, shaking tone. Through clenched teeth, he heard her swear at Dameron before turning back to the phone. “I’m not very happy with you right now.”

“What the hell is going on?”

“You…this is all your fault! He’s taken my father! He told me to get Dameron and stop your little plan to change the case or he’d kill him. I can’t let my father die. Why is he after my family, I haven’t done anything. He told me that…” she took a shaky breath before screaming the last part. “Ben Solo needs to follow the clues, his clues. And make his choice.”

“Listen,” he shook his head, turning in a panic to Rey. She’d been pushed to the edge. The other days, the other loops, he had been after her too. This had started long before they’d found out who he was, he slowly realized. He knew that nothing good could come out of this day. “Just listen to me, okay. Don’t believe him. When did he get to you?”
“When?” she sounded confused. “That’s your only question?”

“Yes. When?” He knew whom they were working with. He was starting to expand the people he was frightening, making good on his threat. Kylo couldn’t breathe; now he had put more people at risk. What was a nightmare now was pure hell.

“He…he came by my house. My father called me after 6.30, when I was already at work. The fucking work I do for you!” She breathed deeply. “He made me to come. Watch them beat my father. Told me what I needed to do: stop my boss from ruining his plan again.”

He shook his head. “What happened exactly?”

“Are you stupid!” She snapped. “Some insane man in a truck picked him up, threatened and held a knife to his neck so I knew I had to do something! He’s going to kill him! Because of you!”

Shit, shit, the truck. “Okay, Bebe. Doing anything to your boss and his nephew won’t fix anything, okay? Just…just let him get the boy safe and then let him go. He’s been manipulating you for a long time now, okay? You’re stronger than this. You need to show him you won’t back down, okay? I promise that when this day is right, your father will be fine and won’t remember anything. Okay?”

She sobbed lightly. “I can’t…I…have a gun. I don’t want to use it. But he said he’d kill him if I didn’t listen.”

“You can’t let him win, okay? We’re going to figure this out and we’ll work with you. I promise you. Just, make sure that the boy is safe,” he spoke calmly, squeezing Rey’s hand. He’d brought them all into danger by forming the team. He felt guilt settle into his shoulders. He’d brought this terror to his friends. He was better off just working alone.

“I…are you going to find him?”

“Yes,” he answered. “Just, let Poe do what he needs to do. Don’t hurt him. Let him go back to work and we’ll find him.”

“I…I’m probably fired.”

“Damn right.” He heard in the background.

“Where was he taken?” He looked firmly at Rey. He had to wait to tell her all of this, but he needed to know where the truck would be.

“I…I was just…at work and he stopped him. It’s…it’s in Brooklyn. On Green Street.”

Another time and place to be. Great.

“Bebe, you sound much calmer now, okay? You’re doing really great. I’m…you work really hard. And we need you, okay? I want you to give the phone to Poe now. I want him to tell me what you’re doing. Can you do that?”

“I…I just don’t want anything to happen to my father.” A quiet cry left her lips.

“Nothing will. Now, can you help me, please?”

He hated being on the phone. He had no idea where they were and what they were doing.

Dameron’s voice came back on the line. “Jesus Christ, Kylo. Why didn’t you know about this?”
“Well, I do now so it won’t happen again. Where are you?”

“Sitting in the car. Outside my sister’s ex’s. And this crazy bitch won’t let me go,” he paused and he heard him cover the phone. “She…she’s letting me go. Okay. Come on, Elias.”

He heard the car door open and close, followed by another closing door. Poe was taking deep breaths, and he heard him say something to his nephew in Spanish. “She’s staying in the car. She looks…how in the hell didn’t you know about this?”

“It…it hasn’t happened before,” he sighed, heavily. “He’s…he’s going after you all now.”

“Oh shit, Kylo, she’s got the gu-“ this was followed by the distinct, but muffled, sound of a gunshot.

“Dameron!”

The few seconds of silence that followed made him want to scream.

“She fucking shot herself! Oh shit! Elias, don’t look. Oh my god. Kylo, I’ve got to go. I need an ambulance. I…I’ll call you back.”

He looked at the phone in his hand and then back to Rey. She looked at him in shock, having heard most of it. Shaking his head, he took a deep breath.

“What’s Finn’s number?”

Rey looked at him and her eyes widened. She grabbed the phone and dialled, quickly handing it back to him. He answered and Kylo could hear his annoyance.

“I’m just hanging out, waiting for your homeless man. What’s going on?”

“Call your closest friends and tell them to watch out,” he said, quickly. “We have to go, but just…be careful. Please. He’s after people we know. Just don’t go to them.”

“What…what are you talking about?”

He felt the world collapsing around him and they hadn’t been awake for more than a couple of hours. He’d involved so many people in the previous days. He didn’t know how to reach them all.

“Finn, I need you to tell me exactly what you do on a normal day. What would you have done today if you weren’t given that note?” He looked around the street, still waiting for dark men to come out from nowhere.

“I don’t know, I guess…I start there at 5 a.m., so I get home around noon. I sleep for about an hour and then I need to head to the restaurant on Tuesdays. I start there after one and then I’m washing dishes until after five. Then I meet up with some of the kids at the rec centre for part of practice, um, what is it in September…it’s floor hockey,” he finally said, catching Kylo’s distinct breathing over the phone. “Sorry, I couldn’t remember.”

Kylo exhaled. “Cancel the practice. Call and don’t let the kids go there. He might be waiting for them. Finn, I’m…I’m so sorry. You have to stop them from going. Hell, close the rec centre.”

“Are you serious? Is it…is it that bad?”

Kylo looked at Rey and saw the pain in her eyes. This was hurting her too. She might as well die in front of him at this point. “Yes. Yes it is. Can you do that?”
“Yeah, I think I can, listen, Kylo, who is this guy? Why’s he doing this?”

He just met Rey’s eyes, shaking his head. “He’s trying to destroy me by getting to the people I care about. Finn, if anything happens…please, just trust me. We’ll get it right another day. There will be another chance.”

“I…that better be true. Look, I have to get off the phone. I think I see him coming. I’ll call you later. Okay?”

“Sure.”

He hung up the phone, collapsing against the wall behind him. Rey stepped into his line of sight as he felt his breathing getting out of control. He couldn’t see and he couldn’t think. She grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him.

“Please, Kylo, focus.”

He just shook his head, closing his eyes and letting his head rest against the wall. “It’s all falling apart.”

“Give me the phone,” she demanded. “We need to call your mother. What’s her name?”

He nodded, letting it all just wash over him. Watching him kill her. Watching him wait for them. Watching her die over and over again. Making love to her, only to watch her die again. He hadn’t called his mother yet, there hadn’t been time. Why didn't he ever have time for her?

“Leia.” He numbly dialled the number and thrust her the phone. They shouldn’t be on the street but he had a feeling this day wasn’t about to end anytime soon.

“Hi, Leia? It’s Rey. We…we haven’t spoken before but…yes. I…we’re in some trouble right now. And we’re worried about you,” he watched as Rey was able to take control while he was losing it. He couldn’t put this on her shoulders. He gestured for the phone and she handed it to him.

“He’s going after other people, mom. It’s all starting to fall apart. Just…just don’t let anyone inside. Call your building’s security and say you saw something suspicious. Be careful. Please,” he clenched the phone, almost ready to drive up to Albany.

“Ben, slow down. What are you talking about?”

“The man…the man at the nursing home. He’s not your father. That’s your uncle. Your father is the one doing all of this. He…mom something awful is happening to me. I’m sorry I haven’t called in so long. I need…I need to get through this day,” he ran his hand over his face. “I can’t really explain right now, but I need to know that you’re okay. I can’t let him hurt you. I need to find him and stop him from killing again.”

“Anakin? Anakin is doing this thing to you?”

“Yes, talk to Owen. Then call me and tell me exactly what he said. I can’t protect everyone. I need to keep Rey safe,” he met her eyes and she just shook her head.

His mother sighed. “I…I’ll be okay. Ben, just be careful. Keep her safe, your girl. It will be okay. Just…get through the day.”

He shook his head. “I don’t know if I can anymore, mom.”
“You can. And you will. Go. Find him. I’ll talk to you later.”

He hung up and turned to Rey again, rubbing his face with his sleeve.

“I don’t know who else to call,” he looked blankly at his phone. “Maybe your friend at the courthouse?”

“I haven’t called Rose. We need to call her,” he nodded and she quickly dialled her number. Maybe he was overreacting. Maybe this was a test, to throw him off. Go after Dameron and show his hand. It was clear that it was the assistant, Bebe, who planted the trackers on their phones. There was no other explanation. He would always have the upper hand. This was a way of showing the control that he had.

He slowly phased back into her conversation. She was nodding, reaching for his hand.

“I told her what you told me. She’s going to check on Holdo and make sure that the other man, the redhead that you mentioned, is taken in,” Rey looked at him seriously. “Will she be okay?”

“I…I hope so.” He slowly shook his head. “We don’t really use her more than to spy on the DA. But it’s good that you called her.”

The phone buzzed to life in his hand again and he dreaded whatever he was about to hear.

“Yeah?”

“Hey, it’s me again,” Poe’s voice was on the line and he exhaled at the sound. “She might make it, they don’t know. Listen, Elias is freaked out. I’ve sent him with his dad and they’re heading out of town.”

“Good, good, that’s a good idea. Look, get back to the office. I need you to tell us if anyone else has been threatened today,” he leaned against the wall of the store they were outside again. “But now we have the clue about where that damned truck will be if he tries this again. He’s not after your nephew, but it’s good to be careful. He might try this again tomorrow so we need to be ready.”

“Kylo, I just watched my assistant shoot herself in the head after having her dad kidnapped. I’ve worked with her for years and now she’s just…,” he could hear the other man sigh. “But yeah, hey, I sure do like being at work.”

“Be careful.”

He finally hung up the phone and let it drop to the ground. He slid down the wall and sat on the sidewalk. Rey looked down at him and then joined him on the ground. They watched the people stream by them on their way to work as they ignored the two adults crouched at street level. Life was just continuing on; there was nothing he could do to stop it.

“What just happened?”

“Everything. Nothing. He’s trying to drive me insane. It’s almost working, after yesterday and this,” he reached for her. “I’ll never let you die alone. But what I want most is for you not to die.”

Rey shook her head, trying to ignore what he was saying. “How…how’s Bebe?”

He shrugged. “She shot herself. Dameron sent his nephew out of town. One less kid to get killed.”
“What…what do we do now?”

He could only shake his head. “This can’t be the final day. But we need to try to keep more bad things from happening to our friends. I just don’t know how.”

They felt defeated, heading to the station. It was too early in the day for it all to fall apart already. Sitting in the taxi, he just blankly watched the world go by. The previous days were weighing on him more than the threats, but he couldn’t ignore how it made him feel.

His phone started to buzz and he dully answered it.

“Yeah?”

“That’s no way to greet you grandfather.”

His back was rigid as he met Rey’s eyes.

“Where are you,” he said, flatly.

“I’m everywhere, Ben. How are your friends?”

“Everyone is fine.”

“Don’t lie to me.”

He clenched his jaw and shook his head. “I think you can forget one of your options. I’ll never work with you.”

Anakin let out a slow breath. “Well, that leaves us with only two choices now. I still know where you are. How did your friend take the news about his boy? Vos is mostly useless, but he got this part right.”

“Go to hell.”

Anakin laughed. “Well, it looks like you won’t be killing me today. Let’s have more fun. Now, who else do you know? You really didn’t have any friends before today. I’m so glad I broadened your network.”

“Just…just let this day end. Please.”

“You know how it has to end. Do you want them all to be dead?”

“No.” He hung up the phone, deciding that he didn’t need to be mocked anymore today. He sighed and shook his head. “This is going to be a hard day.”

Rey started towards their desks when they arrived and he pulled her away, heading to the lab instead. The feeling there was decidedly down. Poe wouldn’t be back yet, but they needed to talk and he needed to shake the dark corners that his mind was taking him.

“The roof, come on,” he motioned towards the stairwell. “We need to be alone.”

She followed him, looking concerned. He needed to explain to her what was going on. He couldn’t leave her in the dark.

Emerging into the dull sunlight, she grabbed his arm.
“Kylo, I know he’s killing children, but I really need to know what you’re thinking. Why... why is he making you so afraid?”

“We were in the loop before I realized it,” he said, flatly. “That’s how he knew the day from the start. But he can’t change things until I wake up. He sets it in motion in the early morning, before around 6 a.m. It’s like... I know he brought me into the loop. Maybe he did it on purpose, maybe it was an accident. He figured out who I was and now I’m ruining his plans by not playing his game.”

“So he’s been ahead of us from the start? He knows your routines and where you will be?”

He nodded. “I think that he got to her, Bebe, and she’s the one that put the trackers on our phones and put the trace on my credit cards. It’s not hard to figure out who I am with a little digging.”

“Who... who are you?”

“My real name is Ben Solo. He’s my grandfather, Anakin Skywalker. I have this genetic disorder. The children do too; he found them through a database. And that’s how he found me. He meant for us to find the first boy. Maybe he was trying to get me into the loop from the start. But there was something about today that changed everything,” he felt exhausted already. Some of the lingering aches from the previous day were starting to settle in his bones. “I just want to run again. I want this all to go away. I’m tired of looking at the pictures of dead children. I’m tired of talking to their parents, making them relive the worst day of their lives. I can’t bring them back. Why should just Quirin live? Why do I deserve to be alive? Maybe I should just let him kill me so this will stop.”

“Shh, come here.” She pulled him into her arms and he numbly leaned into her. “None of this sounds real. How can this be happening?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know why I’ve brought this monster into your life. If you hadn’t been partnered with me, none of this would be happening to you,” he stroked her hair, feeling the warmth of the back of her neck.

“Kylo, I know I didn’t get to pick my partner, but I’m here now,” she whispered against his chest. “If you are afraid, then share that with me. We’ll deal with this, one step at a time.”

“I think... I think I’m still tired from yesterday.” She shook his head. “My thoughts are everywhere. It’s all just blurring together. We... we were at the beach once. It was a beautiful day. You made me take a break. But we’re so close now and I can’t just walk away again. You were so beautiful in the hotel room. The way you feel and the way you move... I’ve never met a woman like you. When we make love, I feel whole. You are soft but strong. I never want those moments to end because I don’t know when the last time will be.”

“Tell me,” she kissed his cheek, moving to meet his eyes. “Tell me what it’s like.”

He ran his hand against her face, memorizing how she looked now and forgetting how she looked, dead on the roof. Her empty eyes and the red marks on her neck echoed around the living Rey. He was starting to lose control of all of the days.

“When I kiss you, it’s like there’s nothing else happening in the world. You let me touch you and you’re so... I can’t believe you want me in the way that I want you. You could have anyone and you let me undress you, kiss you, touch you and be inside you. I love the way you taste and how you sound when you... climax. I don’t know what to do anymore. It doesn’t work to push you away, because you figure it out. It’s not fair that I remember all of this and to you, I’m still a stranger who yelled at you and,” he brushed an eyelash off of her cheek, “I don’t even remember
She looked at him and it felt like she could see right into his soul. “You have to get back in control. We’re here now. We’ll find away. I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. But if I made you happy, made you feel cared about, then it’s okay that I don’t remember.”

“It’s not okay.” He looked up at the sky. “Rey, you told me about what happened in high school. I…the first time, I think that I forced you. It’s something that happened and if I had known, then I would have been more careful. Like you are.”

“I must really trust you if I told you about that.” She shook her head. “No one knows about that.”

“Is your great aunt still alive?” He asked, worried they would have to make another dash across the city.

“No, she passed away years ago. I really only have my friends now.”

He bent down to kiss her. “And me.”

“If you…as long as you want me.”

“Only you,” he replied and then kissed her again. “Let’s…let’s go back inside.”

He felt a little better when they left the roof. He had lost track of time. Had they done everything that they had to do? They waited in the break room, avoiding the suspicious looks of the lab workers as they hurried through their days. There were no more families to talk to. They knew how they were connected. They knew that he had some end game planned with Palpatine and Kenobi.

He took a deep breath and tapped Rey’s arm. She didn’t know all of this, he realized again. So he told her. He went through all of the names, all of the details, and where they had been. She nodded, slowly filling up her notebook. He slowly realized that if he did die permanently, all of this would be gone. Anakin would be permanently stuck in the loop and his rage would overtake him. A dark thought ghosted across his mind; he needed to tell Quirin all of this. But what the hell would a nine-year-old boy do with all of this information?

Dameron arrived an hour later, glaring at them but also looking blank.

“She’s gone,” he mumbled, sitting across from him. “I’ve worked with her for years. She…she’s annoying but also good at her job. What…what am I going to do?”

Poe was looking at his hands, before he leaned back to stare at them.

“Poe, I’m so sorry,” Rey said, reaching for him. “We’re going to fix it, in some way.”

“What with the ‘he’s living the same day’ bullshit?” Dameron laughed, bitterly. “At first, I thought you were just nuts. And then this happens. I…what did he do to her?”

Kylo frowned. “He…he was in the loop before I fell into it. He’s put trackers on our phones, so he must have gotten to her somehow. He knows who’s around me and whom I work with. That’s how he knew about your nephew and could use it against us.”

“So that’s how he can take the kids without getting caught.” Poe nodded, slowly sitting up. “So we’re screwed. That’s what you’re saying.”

“I’m beginning to feel that way.” Pausing, he sighed and Rey frowned at him. “But she won’t let us
The ringing of Poe’s phone interrupted their conversation. He looked at it with wide eyes, before excusing himself to take the call in the hallway. He dreaded whatever would happen next. Rey looked from Kylo to him. He met her gaze and felt fear sweep over him as he heard the other man shout from the hallway.

He stormed back into the room and threw the phone against the wall. Dameron turned to face them. Tears rimmed his eyes. “They were followed and ran off the road. The guy…the guy just opened the door and shot him in the head.”

“Poe, I’m sor—…”

Dameron slammed his fist down on the table. “You said he wasn’t after Elias. You said that he wasn’t after him. Fuck you and your insane story, Kylo Ren.”

He shoved the table in their direction and stormed out of the room. Rey shifted to go after him and Kylo grabbed her arm.

“No, no, let him go.”

Rey pulled away from his touch. “You told him it would be okay, Kylo.”

“I know, I know.” He tried to meet her eyes, but she turned away.

She was focused on the wall. “You can’t…you can’t do that to him again.”

“No,” he said, shaking his head. “It won’t happen again.”

“What are you going to do?”

He let his shoulders sag. “I need them. We can’t do it alone. But we can be ahead of him. It must have been Bebe from the start with our phones. He’s been toying with her, like Holdo, Kenobi, and Palpatine and everyone around us. Even if we stop working with them, it won’t change anything. He knows I care about them now.”

She gently set her hand on his shoulder. “You…we can’t let this get to us. It will be right tomorrow? The next today?”

He numbly nodded. “I’d start it all over again right now if I could. Rey, I don’t know how many days I have left. But I don’t want more people to suffer.”

She squeezed his arm, eyes looking glassy. “I’m going to go find him.”

“Look in the crash room.”

“What?”

“The little room, off to the side. It looks like a closet.”

She left him alone in the lab and he slumped down in the break room chair. He pictured Elias, his small smile and innocent eyes. Now, those eyes were cold and lifeless. What was he going to do?

He heard the clock tick in the corner. There were so many hours left until 2 a.m. If he just left now, he’d avoid having to hear about more death. He wouldn’t have to see her die. He’d be a coward, but his sanity might emerge intact.
Her rapid footsteps filled the hallway and he stood.

“Kylo, he’s taken something. I…we need an ambulance,” she gasped, quickly running back down the hallway.

He jumped to the desk phone and made the call, not even hearing what he was saying. They were at the station; help wouldn’t be far. He hung up the receiver and ran to the room, seeing Rey trying to force her fingers into Poe’s mouth as he fought against her. A bottle of pills rested at his side. He grabbed at the man, holding his shoulders.

“Let us help you,” he mumbled, struggling against him.

Poe swatted at Rey. “Your help…your help? You can’t even help yourselves. My assistant and best friend is dead. My nephew is gone. You…you brought this to us.”

“Help will be here soon,” was all he could say.

“Throw it up, Poe, please,” Rey pleaded. “Don’t give up.”

He looked at them both and shook his head. “It’s…Potassium Cyanide. Just…just…”

His eyes rolled back in his head as the door flew open, paramedics looking for them. Rey and Kylo backed out of the room as they tried to work on the man. Rey was shaking as he brought him close to her. They wheeled in a stretcher and quickly removed him, pumping furiously at his chest. But Kylo knew he was gone.

Rey buried her head into his shoulder.

“He can just make people do anything,” she mumbled. “What is he?”

“He’s a monster,” he rubbed her back, kissing her forehead. “I won’t let him get you.”

She shook her head. “Kylo, we should just get away. We should just run. He’ll be after us and leave them alone.”

He listened as the sound of the EMTs faded. “He…he won’t stop. He’ll burn down the city looking for us.”

The other lab workers started milling around and he pulled her towards the catwalk back to their part of the building. He found an empty room and he sat her down on the worn couch in the corner.

“This is all about me,” he said. “We have to find where he’s taking the children. We have to solve the day.”

Rey just leaned against him. “Poe’s dead, isn’t he?”

Kylo slowly nodded, trying and failing to hold back a sob.

She grabbed his knee. “How…how well do you know him? In the loop?”

He stared at her hand. “He’s reliable. He’s always questioning what I do, but always amazed when I’m right. I should never have treated him the way I did before. It’s the same with you. I took everyone around me for granted. Today can’t be the last day. I won’t…I won’t let it end like this again for him.”

She ran her hands through her hair, breaking from his grip. “I…I don’t know what to do.”
“I don’t either.”

He nudged her forward, towards one of the empty lab rooms. Seated, she sobbed against his shoulder. Anakin had basically won at this point and it wasn’t even noon. If he wasn’t so afraid of dying, he’d just end it all at this point. But he couldn’t. He had to go on to stop all of this from happening again.

His phone rang and he coldly answered it.

“He it’s me,” Finn said. “I got him. It’s all good. They found the bomb and everything. I still can’t believe that you knew.”

“That…that’s good Finn.”

“Wait, what happened?”

He could only exhale. “We…we just got some bad news. Watch out for yourself, okay?”

“Sure. I’m…I’m going to go back to work.”

He hung up the phone and stood. “I…I have no idea where to go now.”

She stood to reach for his hand. “Let’s…let’s go talk to Rose. Make sure she’s okay.”

He nodded. “Please don’t hate me. I…I wish I knew how to fix this.”

She pulled him forward, heading out the back door. “It’s…I don’t hate you. Come on.”

She had to guide him to the taxi and he felt things blurring together again. How many times had they taken taxis? How many times had they done this?

“Kylo,” she hissed, shaking his leg. “Something’s happened.”

Lights, sirens and chaos blocked the taxi. He stepped out of the car, ignoring the driver and the people running by them from the courthouse. But it wasn’t really there anymore. The front entrance was still smoking, a black hole filling the familiar space. Another officer held him back as they reached the perimeter.

“What happened?” Rey asked, straining to look beyond him. “Please, my friend works there.”

The officer looked them up and down. “I can’t let you go through, detectives.”

Rey was dialling her phone; she looked empty. “It went straight to voicemail.”

He clenched his fist. “What about the DA?”

The officer just shook his head. “It’s not good, man.”

“This can’t be happening.” His head trembled sad he looked around at the bleeding and injured people, being helped to ambulances. The sight echoed another dark day and the dread entrenched itself further into his soul. “We stopped the bomber.”

He narrowed his eyes at him. “What are you talking about?”

“Nothing, it’s nothing.”
Rey kept dialling her phone, swearing at it. “Please, Rose, please.”

Finally, she looked at him with brief hope.

“Rose? Where are you? Are you okay?”

She brought her hand to her mouth and slowly shut her eyes. “It…it’s okay. You tried your best. What happened?”

He shifted his weight from side to side. They shouldn’t be on the street. He could be anywhere.

“It…okay. Rose, I’ll come see you at the hospital if I can. We have to catch him but we will stop the man who did this.” She finally hung up and looked at Kylo with clouded eyes. “He just walked in and then turned around and left. That’s when everything blew up. She…she’s in really bad shape.”

He met her eyes, worried that this would tear them apart. He reached for her and she lightly stepped forward, steeling her face.

“What will he do next?” She asked.

“I don’t know.” He took in the scene once again, worried about what would be coming next.

The station was basically empty when they returned. He knew they should have stayed at the scene, but he needed to get somewhere remotely safe. Surprisingly, the captain was still at his desk as they entered their corner of the building. Kylo got a cold feeling as he approached the small office.

Tekka wasn’t just sitting at his desk. His throat had been cut.

“He’s going to get them all.” Rey grabbed at his hand. “What do we do?”

“There…there’s nothing we can do.” He slowly stepped out of the room. “We need to keep tracing the clues. Your doctor friend, Yoda, he said something the other day. I need to talk to him.”

“Kylo, he’s killed the captain. Poe is dead and Rose might not make it,” she was talking in between slow, even breaths. “How do we just…keep going? I…what if you’re wrong? What if this isn’t just some day that will all be wiped away when you wake up tomorrow?”

She was sounding stressed. It was working. He was driving them apart. She firmed her face and turned. He followed her out of the house, trying to think of the right words. She hailed a cab and glanced at him over her shoulder.

“Please, Rey. Just…believe me.”

She took a long, shaky breath. “Promise me that there won’t be any more days like this.”

“There won’t be,” he shook his head, “He’s…he needs to be in control. This is his way of telling me that. He’s trying to turn you against me. I can’t…I can’t lose you, please, Rey. I will make this right.”

She gave the cab driver the address and slumped down. “I…okay. I won’t let him win. And you can’t either.”

They silently wound across the city. There were still too many hours left in the day and he knew exactly where they would be now. Rey finally sat up and gave him a soft look.
“Tell me…tell me something good. From a better day.”

“We…we went to the beach. I bought you a new dress and you looked stunning. We had a good dinner and it just felt…normal. We haven’t been on many real dates, but that felt real. Like we weren’t being hunted.” He reached for her hand and she gave him a sad nod.

They pulled up to a small clinic on the ground floor of an apartment building, far from the office. He thought about leaving their phones in the cab, but they were their only connection to Finn. He was worried about what would happen to him, but had to find out what the doctor knew.

The place was empty. He rang the bell at the front desk and the small man shuffled out from the back.

“Rey?” He greeted in question. “Here you are. Problem you have?”

“Hi, look we…we have a problem. This is my partner, Kylo Ren.”

He looked at him and quirked his head. “Injured, you are?”

“No, not today,” he said. “We haven’t met before today, but we have on another today. On that day, you told me about a friend that might have had the same problem as me. Tell me about what your doctor friend said when he was drunk, how he was stuck in the same day.”

“Strange problem to have.” He shook his head. “Come inside. Sit down.”

They followed him as he shuffled down the hallway. Inside his tiny office, he looked around the room, trying to find anything that would connect Anakin to this man.

“Remember him I do,” Yoda shook his head. “Died, his wife had, when she was very young. Missed her, he did.”

“What happened to her?” Rey asked.

“Accident it was,” he shrugged. “Pregnant with twins. Helping her, two boys were. She fell, badly hurt. The children came and she passed away.”

“What was her name?” Kylo pressed, sitting up.

The doctor shrugged. “Remember, I do not.”

“Your friend’s name. What was his name?” He was getting nowhere with these cryptic answers.

“Vader. He went by Vader.”

Rey looked at him. “Do you know that name?”

He shook his head. “No. Nothing like that has come up yet.”

So another name and another clue. This was a wasted trip.

“Tired you are,” Yoda said. “Eat you should. Rest you should.”

He could only slowly nod. “Yeah…we’ve had a hard morning.”

“Hmmm.” He nodded. “Sandwiches there are in the fridge. Eat and rest.”
They could only sadly nod and accept the offer. Rey looked almost exhausted, looking nervously at her phone. Kylo knew that whatever news they got, it wouldn’t be good.

The strange doctor moved in and out of the room, glancing at them with hooded eyes. “Much you have seen.”

“Yes, and none of it has been good.” Kylo sat down on the worn couch in the corner. No matter where he went, there were always echoes of other places there. “What happens when you always see the darkness in the world and start to forget the light?”

Rey sat down next to him, taking his hand. A text buzzed on her phone and she glanced at it.

“She’s about to go into surgery.” She shook her head. “They won’t let her take her phone. She heard that…the DA…the DA’s dead.”

Kylo could only sigh. “So this can’t be his last day.”

Rey leaned against him. “What does he want with them?”

“I…at this point, I don’t care,” he felt emptiness in his voice as he paused and rubbed the back of his neck. “That’s something for tomorrow.”

She shook her head. He put his arm around her and tried to focus on staying in the moment and not slipping into the tempting detachment of the day. That’s what he wanted. Their phones would ring from the office and he motioned for Rey to ignore it.

“We don’t need any more bad news.”

She rubbed her eyes. “I just want to go home.”

“Your apartment?”

“Britain,” she smirked. “America hasn’t brought me very much good.”

“What would you be doing there, if you had stayed?”

She shrugged. “I…probably wouldn’t have been a cop. I don’t know what I’d do. I probably would have tried to find a way out. I wasn’t very good at school, but I would have liked to go to a proper university. I remember, after I was raped, I just wanted the world to go away. If it wasn’t so focused on getting into the academy, it would have just eaten me up inside. I hate that man for what he did to me and my aunt. There are evil people in the world and I want to stop them. This just makes me feel powerless again, like I’m back on the floor, his hands on me.”

He stroked her back. “I’m sorry I wasn’t there.”

She leaned against him. “What do we do? Where to we go? I feel useless just waiting.”

He smoothed her hair and she yawned, shutting her eyes.

“Shh. Rey. Go to sleep. Rest. We…there are too many hours left.”

He held her close as she nodded. They hadn’t been sleeping much the last few weeks. He was beginning to feel the ghost aches returning and realized how exhausted he was, inside and out. Poe was gone. Rose was hurt. The DA was dead. The captain was also dead. This day was not going to end well and he just wanted it to be over. He felt her fall asleep and rested his head against her.
“I’m so, so sorry Rey.” He shut his eyes and let himself falling asleep. They were safe, but being watched. He could feel it. He added the name Vader to the list of things to ask Kenobi and Palpatine, and his mother, about. One more thing to keep track of in his shaken mind.

They slept for short, tortured hours, waiting for the next call.

He was finally woken by his phone. He didn’t know how long he had been asleep. He couldn’t focus on the room around him, not knowing where he was. The doctor’s office. He fumbled at his phone, recognizing Finn’s number. He was almost instantly awake.

“Kylo! He’s here!”

He jumped to his feet, and pulled Rey up.

“Where are you?”

“The rec centre. In Hell’s Kitchen. Shit, you…fuck you man.” He heard distant gun shots and the screaming of young voices.

The phone call ended in static and he grabbed at Rey, needing to find an exit. He needed to leave now, even though he was still swimming up from sleep.

She followed, blindly, still waking up. They passed by Yoda, calling to them, but he didn’t care. It all felt like a daze as they asked the cab driver about where they might be going.

The man had a police radio on his dashboard and they could hear everything. Rey pressed her head against his chest.

“This…this sounds bad.”

“Yeah,” he mumbled, pressing his lips against her hair. “Just get us there.”

The cab driver looked solemn and he could have sworn that he’d met him before. The long drive was broken by the occasional buzz of his phone of the crackling of the radio.

They came upon a scene of panic and horror for the second time that day. Night had fallen without him realizing it. Children, young kids to teenagers, were running from the building. Finn stood there, waiting for them with dark eyes.

Not thinking, he jumped out of the car.

“What happened? Was he here?”

Finn dully nodded. “He told me he was sending you a message. And you weren’t listening.”

Finn turned and went into the gymnasium. Kylo followed quickly behind. There were small bodies, running and bleeding by them, screaming from the building. Why hadn’t Finn listened to him? Why did this have to happen? The questions pounded against his mind, sending trembles down to his fingertips.

When they stopped moving, the only sounds around them were cries from the dying and injured children. The gym was dully lit and he couldn’t breathe. He saw Finn’s shoulders start to shake. He erratically pointed the gun at him; Kylo took a cautious step back. The dull lights of the gymnasium darkened his features as his eyes raged at him.

“Finn, you don’t have to do this.”
“He killed these kids!” He screamed, waving the gun at him. “They’re dead because of your fucking choice, man!”

“Please, Finn. I can fix this. Please don’t shoot me. I can’t do anything if I die for good.” He held up his hands, trying to steady his tone, despite his rapidly beating heart.

“Fuck your bullshit!” He heard the sirens outside and the sound of Rey’s shoes, entering the space. He noticed her run to an injured girl in the corner, putting her hands to the wound.

“Finn! Please! He did this to hurt us all,” she called. “Help me help them!”

Finn’s hand shook, a tear spilling down his cheek. “I…it’s all my fault.”

“No, no, you told me. I…I should have listened,” Finn looked at the scene around them. Kylo kept his focus on the man and rapidly thought of what to say to talk him down. “I thought that you were just insane, but I let this happen.”

“No, it’s not. The only person to blame is the man doing this. You’re helping us catch him, Finn. You’re doing everything that you can,” he said, stepping towards the other man. Finn steadied the gun and he stopped moving. Paramedics were rushing around them, carefully keeping an eye on the two men in the standoff at the centre of the chaos.

Rey handed off the girl and moved to another boy, still casting her eyes towards them. “Help me!”

Finn slowly lowered the gun and nodded to Kylo. He quickly dashed towards a teenager with a wound to his leg. It was bleeding everywhere and the boy was frantic, pleading and crying at the wound.

“Why…what happened?” He was shaking.

Kylo pulled off his suit jacket, tightly wrapping it around the wound. “A mad man is on the loose. Do you remember when he got here?”

“Around six?” The boy’s lips were pale. “Why’d he shoot us?”

“To make you afraid. To make us afraid…” He looked around, still noticing Finn standing mournfully in the centre of the gym. He waved to a free paramedic and kept pressure on the wound.

“Do you remember what he looked like?” He asked.

“He looked like a normal old dude, like a retired teacher or something,” the boy winced at the pressure. “Am I going to die?”

“No,” Kylo said, leaving out the not tomorrow part.

The paramedics pushed him aside, starting to work on the boy. He slowly turned back to man with the gun. Finn just shook his head, his face blank.

“Finn, no!”

He was too far away to stop him from putting the gun to his head and firing. The screams that echoed around him dug into him like he’d been shot himself.
This day. This day had been the worst day.

Numbly, they helped triage the others; 14 were dead, including Finn, and 35 were injured. When the last were taken away in the final ambulance, he slumped beside Rey in the hallway.

“I’m afraid of what he’s going to do to me,” her voice was a faint whisper. “He’s coming for me.”

He shook his head, putting his arm around her. “I know.”

“What do we do now?”

“Let’s…let’s just go home.” He kissed her cheek. “I’d rather he come for us there than just sit and wait. We can fight him on our own terms.”

They left the scene of chaos, avoiding the eyes of police officers recognizing them. He just shook his head, climbing into a taxi. So many of these rides had left him dazed at knowing which day he was in.

She was quiet, watching the city stream by.

“There are so many people, so many things that he can destroy,” she said, then sighed. “Kylo, you have to be stronger than him. I…I hope that you’re right and I won’t remember any of this tomorrow because I…I’ve seen two of my friends die today. I feel…I don’t know what I feel. Empty. Tired.”

He took her hand and frowned. “I need to keep going. Rey, we will have a tomorrow. I’m not ready to give up. I’m so, so sorry that you have to die tonight. He’s hurt everyone because of me and a choice I won’t make.”

She reached up to kiss him and he sagged against her. He could lose himself in her. He wanted to be in a place without sorrow and pain. He wanted to be with her, inside of her and touching her most intimate places.

He felt eyes on them when they arrived at his apartment. Unseen, someone was lurking. Waiting for them. It was a death sentence, but he had her in his arms at that moment; he didn’t want to let her go.

“I’m so scared,” she said as they entered the elevator. “I’m so scared for you.”

He kissed her again, pressing her against the wall. “Why? Why are you scared for me?”

She pulled him closer, running her hands up his chest, gripping at his shoulders. “You will remember all of this.”

“Both the good and the bad,” he gently nipped at her earlobe, reaching for desire rather than terror. “I need more good. I…I can’t bring them back today, but I can make it right in the next today.”

He slipped his hand underneath her shirt, moving to feel her breasts. They were soft but still firm, daring him to trace more and more of her skin. Her bra was between them, but it still made him hard, the adrenaline hitting him in the moment. She sighed as the elevator door dinged. He helped her move backwards to his door. He pushed it open, surprised no one was there in his darkened home. That would have been a fitting end, his hand up her shirt. Instead, he shut the door with his foot and shifted with one hand to lock it. Rey’s soft sounds were calling him forward as he guided her towards the couch, taking off her shirt. She gasped, eyes darting from his hands back to his face before his hands slowly reached to undo her bra. Her rose nipples were hard and it made him
shudder as he sat back. He wanted to smile, but there was something beautiful in their desperation. Licking his lips, He took off his shirt and undid his pants, letting them hang loosely on his hips. Rey was still on the couch, her breathing getting quicker as she watched him move. She looked at him with sad yet yearning eyes, taking in his body. He paused for a moment, letting her see his body in a new way, needing for her to know it before he went any further. He owed her that. Slowly, she licked her lips and the guided his hands back to her hips and kissed him again, drawing him in with a gentle murmer of love.

“If I have to die today, then I need to know how you feel. Please Kylo, I can give you something good out of all of this,” she ran her hands against his boxers and he shuddered as her hand brushed his cock. It was almost like she remembered, the way that her hand moved. She was right, both in her touches and words. There had been too much death today. They needed this, but he couldn’t help but touch on the sadness that he felt. She helped him take off her pants and underwear, squirming out of the clothing as his heart started to quicken. She was naked and beautiful in the low light streaming from his kitchen.

Seeing her open up to him, he pressed down to stroke and feel her wetness. She reached for the elastic of his underwear and pulled them down in one swift motion. That was when she wiggled out of his grip, pushing him to stand. He dumbly followed, feeling his erection start to strain against his thoughts. He’d touched her again. With darkened eyes, she dropped to her knees and looked up at him with a parted mouth. He wanted her to suck him off, but almost wanted to be inside her even more. This could all implode at anytime and that pressed on his want for her. Her touches did the same. Sliding her hand up his thighs, she licked his cock, daring him to move from where he stood. He couldn’t hurt her, but saw the way that her eyes traced the thick vein of his erection. He wanted her mouth to follow it, to brush it with her teeth. He met her eyes again and nodded as she kissed his thigh, sending shivers up his body. He settled his hands on her shoulders, he let his head sag, telling her wordlessly to go on. Her hand groped his erection, stroking him lightly before her mouth came around him. It was a slick heat and perfect suction; her lips were delicately parted and her tongue was swirling gentle patterns as she stroked him to the same rhythm as her mouth. She hummed lighting and he had to fight to hold back, trying not to thrust into her mouth as she matched the strokes of her hand with how she was sucking him at a faster pace. He didn’t want to come like this; he needed to be inside her.

“God, Rey,” he sighed. “I love you. Don’t…just forget everything else. Just remember this.”

She shifted, humming and he felt he was near orgasm. He tapped her away, gesturing towards the couch.

“Please,” he said, helping her up. “Tell me what to do.”

“Just…Kylo…they’re gone. Promise me that it will be okay.”

He laid her down, slipping his fingers into her slick vagina, feeling how much she wanted him. He wasn’t forcing her. He was helping her forget. He needed to hear her moan and moved his thumb against her clit in quick circles as he thrust his thick fingers into her. She sighed, lowly, running her hands through his hair. Would this be the last time that he made love to her? He couldn’t let her live this hell tomorrow, but he could make her feel something else right now. He slipped another finger into her and she arched her back, whimpering.

“It will be okay,” he whispered, kissing up her jaw. “What do you want, Rey?”

“I want you,” she ran her hand up his chest, glancing down to see his hand thrusting into her. “Kylo, just…just help me forget.”
He kissed her again, leaving her body with a delicate sigh on her part. He knew how he wants her and nudged her to turn over. After a flash of mischief, she looked at him with clear need and shifted, spreading herself out for him on the edge of his sofa. Her body was perfect and he saw how her inner thighs glistened from his touches. He wouldn’t last long, he thought as she gave him a low look over her shoulder. Carefully, he stretched one leg out to brace himself on the floor and felt for her entrance, taking himself in his hand before driving his cock into her. It slid into her tight hole, long and quick, as he shut his eyes to take in her tautness. Her moan as he entered her made him almost forget everything that he had seen and heard today. Her hands were planted on the arm of his couch as he thrust into her, slow at first and then faster and faster. He pulled nearly out and then drove into her again, hearing their bodies meet in pure ecstasy. He bent down to kiss the back of her neck, gripping her hips to match their thrusts as she bucked against him. Her head sagged down, gasping.

“Kylo, yes,” she hissed as he plunged into her deeply again, harder with each thrust. She reached for him, grabbing at his hip with one hand.

“Is this good?” He managed to gasp, holding back a moan as warmth grew in his belly. His body felt like it was shaking as her vagina tensed around him

“Yes, so good.” She hissed, arching her back against him to bring him in deeper. He knew what she wanted, he could make her forget.

“Do you love me?” She gasped, looking over at their joined bodies.

“Yes. Love you.”

He looked at her bare back as he took a slow roll of his hips, decreasing his pace to take in the moment. How else could this day end? No matter what happened next, he was inside her. He was loving her. He could make her forget. She was moaning his name and he could feel her getting even slicker with need. He quickened his pace, gripping her ass to balance himself as he arched back. He was going to come mainly from the sounds that she was making. Had he had her like this before? No, he didn’t think so. This was too good.

She moaned, clutching at the side of the sofa. He felt his orgasm building and ran his hand threw her hair. She was the only woman who he would ever love and he was going to lose her and himself.

He came without warning her, pulling her hips close to him to fill her. Gasping, he tried not to dig his finger nails into her soft skin. Then he felt her clench around him and all of the emotions nearly came spilling out just like the come he had filled her with. He saw gentle stars drifting past his eyes and groaned. He slowly stilled his thrusts, letting himself still be hard inside of her. His hair was damp from sweat and he could see the raised red on her skin where he had gripped her. She sighed, lowly, and gently moved away from him and he sighed at the feeling of losing her before she turned over and pulled him closer. He wasn’t as hard again but he slipped inside her again, gripping her hips to move her onto his lap, the sticky mess covering them both.

“Let’s…Rey…if I ever get the chance, we will spend the rest of our lives together.”

She looked at him with hooded eyes and nodded. She was so slick with her pleasure and his seed that he wished that he could have her again. With a shake of his head, he tried to focus on her words instead of her body. That’s what he loved more. “Will we have children?”

“Yes. If you want them.”
"I think I do."

He rested his hands on her back and looked up her body. "Don’t ever let me give up."

She sadly shook her head. "I…as long as I’m me, I won’t let you."

It had to end at some point and she climbed off of him, reaching for her clothes. Wiping herself off with her panties, she cast them aside and he had to smirk. She just pulled on her pants and started to button her shirt. He let her be apart from him in those moments, putting on his own clothes. He needed to be prepared for whatever fight that was going to meet them tonight.

Dressed, she settled next to him on the couch to run her hand through his damp hair. "What will you name our children?"

"We’ll talk about that when it happens."

"You keep talking about Quirin. Maybe Quirin is a nice name."

"It’s a great name. He likes you when you get to meet him."

She rested her head on his shoulder. "You…are you scared of dying?"

"No, I’m scared of you dying."

She clutched his leg. "Kylo, you…if this is really happening, you need to keep going. We’ll get him."

He nodded. "Do you…want some tea?"

She looked up at him with a smile. "I’d love some tea."

He moved to the kitchen to put on the water, fixing his shirt. "Hey, do you want…?"

His question was broken by his apartment door bursting open. She had been checking her phone and was met by the two forms coming inside with ragged determination. He dropped what he was holding, needing to stop what was about to happen. It was Anakin and Hux. Not Maul. This could be good or bad. The scramble tore them apart but he dove in, determined to stop what was coming.

Rey fought against Hux and he pushed Anakin aside, towards his kitchen.

"Stop this, stop it all," he hissed. "I’m never going to give in to you."

Anakin just eyed him. "Didn’t I show you what we can do? Ben, we can do everything. Forget her. She’s nothing."

He shoved hard against Anakin. "She’s everything! I will stop you!"

He heard Rey yell and saw Hux tackle her. Reacting, he moved to try to pull him off her, ignoring the taunts from the older man. The red-headed man knocked him back and he stood, shifting to take out his gun. It wasn’t there. Shit.

The sharp stab of a needle pricking his neck made him gasp. He turned, swinging wildly. The man had silently moved behind him, catching him off guard. He whacked the syringe from his throat. He’s knocked Anakin down and he attacked him with a vicious glare in his eyes, pinning the older man to the ground. He had his hands around his collar, wanting to kill him or at least cause him pain. But his hands started to feel numb. Everything started to slow down and he Anakin just
shoved him aside, rising to his feet.

Kylo was paralyzed; whatever Anakin had given him had left him immobile. He was rigid on the floor. His grandfather peered down at him with a tight grin. Rey was struggling under the red-headed man across the room. He held her down, pinning her to the floor. She still fought against him, swearing and hitting him.

“She just won’t give up,” he smirked. “I need to go now. I’ve got to check in on our good friend Kenobi. And you will stay here. You won’t die, but when this day is over, you’ll wish that you were dead. We’ll try this again tomorrow. I will get you on my side, in the end.”

Anakin left the apartment, like a ghost that was never there, leaving him alone with Rey and the red-headed man. He glanced over at him and laughed. He put his hands on Rey’s throat and she scratched at his face, trying to kick out from under him. She was gasping, still fighting to get away. He slowly loosened his grip and gave Kylo a cold, ominous smile.

“I’m going to have fun with her now.” He challenged Kylo with a dark look. “And you get to watch. Oh look, she’s ready for me. Will she taste like your cock?”

He couldn’t move or speak. He couldn’t help her.

Rey screamed as he grabbed his handcuffs, clasp- ing them firmly to her wrists. She looked at Kylo with pained eyes, kicking but also begging for help. She could see that he was helpless and her eyes instantly clouded with tears. She was fighting, but he was quicker, stronger, and heavier than she was. Kylo couldn’t even talk her through the terror, tongue numb in his dumb mouth.

Every sound echoed in the empty apartment. The man ripped open her shirt and she tried to swing her arms at him. He just grabbed her wrists with one hand, holding them aside, pressing them to the ground with a dull thud. Kylo watched as he ran his hand down her stomach, smirking at her and him as he reached the hem of her pants. Kylo felt rage rising as he pressed his hand downward and smiled. Rey squirmed and he could hear her hold back a gasp at the penetration.

“It looks like you got her ready for me.” The cruel voice hissed, dipping his fingers into her. The sound sickened him just as it honoured him only minutes ago. “Is she wet for me or you?”

“Kylo, I’m not giving up!” She shouted, thrusting her hips to the side to get him out of her body. Kylo could only cringe and felt tears rising in his eyes. Hux just shook his head at her fighting and lifted her shoulders and bashed her against the floor. The hard thump made Kylo shudder and he fought against what was holding him back, but still couldn’t move as his body still betrayed him. He couldn’t help her. Rey groaned, stunned on the floor. He saw her go limp, her eyes blinking rapidly before rolling back in her head. She wasn’t knocked out. She was going to feel everything. He shut his eyes, not able to watch what was about to happen to her.

With every sound of clothing being ripped and cut away, he tried to put himself on the beach with her. Enjoying the feeling of the sand, watching her smile. He heard Hux violating her, grunts and thrusts and flesh meeting flesh. He heard her groan awake, whining when he first entered her with vicious anger, but he slammed her head down again. She was lowly crying and pleading for him to stop with every beat of his hips, slamming into her body. She called for Kylo and he couldn’t look. She was going through this hell again because of him. That man was corrupting her, and he was powerless. He finally opened his eyes and kept them locked on hers, not wanting to see anything else. Her head was turned away from her attacker, his hand against her throat, looking wildly at him. He caught a glimpse of him shoving himself brutally into her, his other hand gripped around her neck.
It felt like it took hours.

Instead it was just minutes.

But they felt endless.

There was the dull sound of a stolen climax combined with Rey’s sobs at the feeling. Kylo could only watch and hear, she had to feel it all. He wanted to be sick, but could only lie on the floor and twitch.

Sighing in twisted satisfaction, Hux finally stood, fixing his clothes and spitting on her. He drew a knife from his coat and jabbed it into her side. It would be a fatal wound, but a long death.

“She’s so tight, no wonder you like fucking her,” he said, spitting on her again. “But not so tight anymore, whore.”

He stalked out of the apartment, leaving her broken and partially naked, bleeding on the floor.

Her eyes looked haunted; anguish and hurt filled her face. She rolled to her knees, crawling over to him. He’d brought this to her; she should hate him. Instead, she was coming to him when she needed him most.

She rested her head on his shoulder, weeping and gasping. She shook. He wanted to move, to comfort her, but he was useless.

“Don’t…don’t remember me like this.” Her voice was weak and cracked as she spoke. “Forget this, Kylo. Don’t let it…possess you. I…I’m so tired.”

He couldn’t even hold her as she died. He could only stare up at the ceiling, letting the hours slip by until he could end this day of hell.
Day 21

Chapter Summary

Kylo and Rey finally discover how Kylo is connected to the boy. And Anakin's true motivations are also found out. See tags for warnings.

Chapter Notes

Thanks for hanging in there through the last chapter. There is some fluff here to make up for it :) And Happy Loop Day (sorry I messed up on the day of the week but WHATEVER one day it will be Tuesday, September 24th).

Day 21

He felt empty as he woke up with a shiver and a jolt. It was like the first days seeing her die; waves of nausea started to roll through him. But he still tasted her on his lips, still felt her at his side. Kylo fixed his eyes on the spot across his apartment where the man had raped her and where she died. How was he going to move on from this? He wanted to cry and scream, but instead he just sat numbly on his bed. He could never tell her about this; this Rey was still pure and perfect, not broken down and defiled.

It was 5.42. He needed to put the plan in motion. They couldn’t deviate or else everyone would end up dead. The carnage from yesterday was like nothing he could ever have imagined. Anakin had greater plans and he hoped that it was all just to show him who was in charge. He hated having to play his game, but he would find a way to get around him and his cruelty. He needed to find where he took the children; that would be the key.

He felt dazed as he left his bed, eyeing the spot where he had lay prone before. That hadn’t happened yet. In this today, it hadn’t happened. How was he supposed to keep them all safe?

He called Rey, not able to keep her away any longer. Flashes of that night kept haunting him whenever he closed his eyes. There was a smell that he could never forget.

“Yeah, Niima.”

The block in his chest burst and he sobbed.

“Kylo? Kylo what’s happening?”

He couldn’t make words. He dropped to the floor, weeping. He heard her making soothing noises. They didn’t have time for this, but he couldn’t make words. Too many dark thoughts clouded his mind. He’d let that happen to her again. He’d let everyone down. He had released a monster on people he had actually come to care about.
“Kylo, it’s okay. I’m not dead. I’m okay,” she said. He must have been rambling. “Kylo, where are you?”

“Home.”

“I’ll be right there,” she hung up and he managed to text her. She would probably arrive at the same time as Finn. And he had to call Dameron. And Rose. Everyone was alive. It was okay. He would be okay. He had to be okay.

He stumbled to his feet and opened the door. He sat down heavily beside the frame and tried to count how many days it had been. The damned problem of being in the loop before all of this was not knowing what terror he couldn’t remember.

The alarm started and then the radio clicked on. He lost himself in the familiar tones of the announcer. What was it they told victims? Security. Safety. Routine. Thank God that this was the most routine day he had, if he played into the game.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to the missing children…”

It was still nattering when he heard Rey and Finn meet in the hallway.

“What are you doing here?” Rey asked, looking inside. “Kylo?”

He looked up from the floor and was overwhelmed when he saw her again. He reached for her and she dropped to her knees beside him, letting him pull her into his arms. It hadn’t been the end, but another day like that would break him.

“He’s coming for us, Rey. He’s coming for all of us,” he gasped through his broken sobs.

He saw Rey look up at Finn with a lost look.

“Sorry.”

“It…it’s okay,” he shook his head. He didn’t know what he meant by sorry. He was afraid of closing his eyes and waking up on the floor again.

Rey was stroking his leg. “Can you get him some water?”

“Close and lock the door,” he tried to say without sounding as afraid as he felt. “And get…get my gun. He could be waiting for us.”

Rey just nodded at Finn. “Kylo, where is it? Your gun.”

“Beside the bed,” he finally got his breathing under control. “You’re okay. You’re okay.”

“Yes, Kylo, nothing has happened to me today,” she shook her head. “But I’m here and I’m going to listen to you. Did someone die?”

“Everyone died. He got to everyone.”
Finn returned, reluctantly placing the gun on the coffee table, along with a glass of water. He heard him move to the door, closing and locking it. With shaking hands, he reached for the glass. Rey helped him, rubbing small circles on his back.

“Rey, I need you to call Dameron. You need to send a car…a car to stop his assistant’s father from being taken. That’s how it all starts,” he shook his head. “We don’t…I need…I can’t forget what happened. I don’t know what to do.”

She shook her head. “Will it make you feel better if we called him?”

“Yeah…I can,” he took a long drink of water. “I can explain it to him. He’ll understand.”

She left him for a moment to get her phone and he nearly lost it again. The crow hit the window, reminding him of what was at stake. This wasn’t that today. This was a new chance. He had her again and she’d never remember. He took a steadying breath, focusing on Finn as he stood by the door.

“I guess you have a note for me?”

“Um, yeah,” he put it on the coffee table and Kylo eyed it. “Aren’t you going to read it?”

“I know what it says,” he frowned as Rey sat down next to him, dialling the lab. He leaned against her, just needing to feel her warmth and remember her like this, not broken, bleeding and cold.

“Yeah, it’s Dameron and it’s too early.”

“It’s…it’s Kylo. Look, this is…this is going to sound crazy, but I need you to stop your assistant from taking any phone calls. You need to send a car to her father right now. Our killer is threatening people from the office, people I work with. Stop him from taking her father and then get her to explain why there are trackers on our phones,” he cleared his throat, and wiped the last of the tears from his eyes.

“That’s…that’s quite a story,” he heard Poe lean back.

“There’s more. I think that your sister is up to something with your nephew. You need to go get him and do what you were planning. But they can’t just stay at her ex’s. They need to get out of town. If we stop the man with the truck, they’ll be safe,” he found his voice and started to sit up straighter. Rey was listening and quickly moved to get her notebook. These were clues. These were leads.

“Okay, okay. Let me get this straight. He’s got to Bebe and is after her dad? Sure, okay. I’ll call it in. But what do you know about Elias? How did you know about that?”

“But I’m right, aren’t I?”

He heard the other man sigh. “Okay. I’m on it.”

“Thanks, Poe. We’ll be by later. Please just be careful.”

He hung up the phone and turned to his two guests.

“We…we have a lot to do today.” He stood. “Something is happening to me. I’m living the same day, over and over again. The killer is my grandfather and he’s a…he’s just a monster. The other day, the previous one…everything went wrong because he wanted to show me what he was capable of. We have to be careful, and I have to try not to be afraid and just forget everything.”
“That…that sounds insane,” Finn shook his head. “How is that even possible?”

“Look, I knew you were coming with the note. And I know that you have floor hockey tonight at the rec centre. Finn, if you want to keep those kids safe, they can’t be there. He knows our routines. The loop, or whatever it is, started before I realised it. He’s smart but not omnipotent. He wants us to follow his clues so he can finish what he’s planning with the DA and the man running against him,” he looked firmly at the other man. “I’d recommend calling in sick to your other job, too.”

“What…what happened at the rec centre?”

“You don’t want to know.”

He swallowed and nodded. “I…sure. Yeah. The kids will be disappointed, but you sound serious.”

He gave Finn a quick nod before turning to Rey. “Get changed. We have to go to Rose and get to Holdo and stop that red-headed asshole.”

She blinked at him. “Kylo, I’m sorry. I…what happened to you? I just saw you a few hours ago.”

The tone of her voice sent him back to the previous today. He could still hear her screams in the back of his mind and felt tears start to well again. He blinked them away. There was no time.

“Rey…I’ll tell you on the way,” he turned to Finn again. “I’m going to give you an address. A homeless man will still be waiting for us there. He’s got a bomb, so just call it in as something suspicious. You need to use a burner phone from downstairs. Get us a pair too. I’ll pay you back.”

“I…sure,” Finn nodded. “I’ll be right back.”

“Take the gun. Use it if you have to.”

Finn nodded, tucking the weapon into his jacket before taking off. Alone with Rey, he folded his arms and turned away. She had been so cold…

He felt a soft hand on his arm. “Kylo, what aren’t you telling me. What do I do?”

“I need…I need to think,” he wanted to pull away. The days were blurring together and he was lost in the wash of feelings. “Get changed and I’ll tell you, okay?”

She still looked at him with concern. “You told me you loved me when I got here.”

“I…I’m sorry. I’m not myself today.”

She squeezed his arm and went to get her bag. She walked over the spot where she had died and he was certain he could see two of her: one living and one dead. He needed a drink, or something to take away the phantom images floating through his mind.

Finn returned with the phones and set to fixing the numbers again. Why did these people, with lives and jobs and other friends, accept working with him? He couldn’t keep them safe. He could only warn them and try to stay a step ahead of Anakin.

Rey emerged from his bedroom, her hair down at her shoulders. He focused on the living Rey rather than the dead one, prone at her feet.

“So, the courthouse? Rose?”
He nodded. “We’ll take both of our phones. He’s tracking them. If he thinks he knows what we’re up to, following the clues and leads that we have, he might not…he might not bring the same hell he brought yesterday.”

As they were about to leave he took one last look at yesterday’s Rey and firmed his face. Never again.

She was casting careful glances at him as they parted from Finn, him to one part of the city and them to another.

“You have to tell me what’s going on now,” she reached for his hand as he stared into space.

“I…right away,” he said. “I need to make another call.”

He dialled the Jinns’ number and calmly, as calmly as he could, explained the threat to their son. How he had traced medical records to choose specific children. Kristina sounds shocked, but acknowledged Quirin’s previous illness. It was easier to bring up things like this now that they had actual facts, not just made up lies. He finally hung up and turned to his partner.

“There’s another part of this day that makes it even harder,” he reached for her hand again. “You always die, before midnight. No matter where we go, or what we do. He kills you because he knows that I love you. I’ve lost you so many times that I don’t know how to be whole without you.”

“You…Kylo, if I hadn’t seen you this morning, heard all the things that you’re saying…” she shook her head. “You’re a different person.”

“I know,” he nodded. “And I was never fair to you before today. I’m not sure how I’ll get through this day. I keep seeing things that aren’t real, that aren’t there. I need you to understand and trust me. Please, Rey, one more time.”

“You’re my partner…I have to trust you. Kylo, you’ve never talked to me like this before,” she looked at their hands again. “Do you really mean all of this? No one has ever loved me before.”

“I do. Every part of you,” he leaned over to kiss her cheek. “We will stop him and then I promise, I’ll never let you go.”

She looked at him with hope and trust and she shook her head in agreement.

“So, explain it again, so I get everything right. How many days have you lived through? What leads do we have so far?”

He slowly went through the paths they had taken, both right and wrong. Figuring out the connection to medicine and the birthdays had been the biggest breakthrough. He was still frustrated by a different name from Yoda, but that was a piece for the greater puzzle. Could there be someone above Anakin, telling him what to do? Kenobi and Palpatine were obvious pawns for some political plan he had. Or else he just wanted chaos. The previous today had shown that he was capable of much harsher things than just snatching and murdering children.

“They’re all in the loop. They know who takes them, but not where he takes them. That’s why we need to talk to Quirin. He’s…there’s just something about him. Maybe that’s why I fell into the loop,” he looked out the window and sighed. “I need to call my mother. She thinks that her father is lying, basically dead, in a nursing home. She has to find information for me and I need to make sure that she’s safe.”
They’d reached the courthouse, so that call could wait. He made the hard choice of separating from Rey, who went to Rose to explain the two strange men that would be by at some point. It was still early in the day, but they had a lot of ground to cover. He was going to get Holdo.

He knocked on her door and entered without letting her answer. Planting his hands on her desk, he glared at her.

“We know everything, Amilyn. We know that he got to you and that you’re playing both sides for whatever he’s promised you,” he channelled all of his earlier anger into his voice and she sat back in shock. “Now, I know that he’s got to your boss too. I really recommend going to him right now and tell him what you’ve been up to. Campaign fraud won’t look good for either of you.”

She shook her head, about to deny what he was saying and then her face fell. “How…how did you find out?”

“I just did. Don’t warn him. Don’t tell him what I just told you. Take accountability for your mistakes,” he frowned. “And don’t ever poison anyone’s coffee again. If I hear from you or see you again today, it won’t end well for you. Get out of here and go talk to your boss. And then just fuck off, for all I care.”

He turned and left, making determined strides back towards the stairs and to Rey. She met him halfway with a small smile. His heart beat quicker every time he looked at her.

“How did it go?”

He shrugged. “It went. Does Rose have the information? Can she get more security here today?”

She nodded. “She sounded freaked out, but I told her it’s a credible threat.”

He phone, his regular one, rang. It was Poe and he answered quickly, afraid of what he was about to hear.

“Everything’s fine. I…they got him. Bebe got a call from her father and he said that the cops took the guy down. I’m just dropping off Elias now. He’s freaked out too, but it’s…it’s all good,” he could hear him shake his head. “I don’t know how to thank you, man.”

“It’s…it’s fine, Poe. Drop him off and tell them to get out of here. Make sure they are not followed. I don’t want anything to happen to him,” he sighed. “Look, we need Bebe to fix our phones. I need to know what she did to them. We’re on our way back to the house.”

“Yeah, me too. I live for my work. See you later.”

He let out a long breath that he didn’t realise he was holding.

“This could be it,” he looked at his phone. “This could be the last day. We’re doing everything right.”

She smiled at him. “Let’s go to work then.”

He called his mother from another taxi and another seemingly similar cab driver, while Rey was on the phone to the office, warning them about two potential suspects being brought in on seemingly random offences, as well as the call from Elias’s mother. He had to tune out her conversation and focus on his mother.

“Hello, Ben. What’s wrong now?”
“Mom, are you okay?” He asked. “Has anyone strange come by?”

“No. But if you’re calling, I’m assuming there’s some emergency.”

He rolled his eyes at her tone. “This is serious, Leia. I need you go talk to the man at the nursing home. He’s not your father; he’s your uncle. Your father is the one that put him there, and he’s the one killing the children. He’s a very dangerous man and I need to find out how this is all connected.”

She took a deep breath. “Are you…are you sure?”

“Ask him. Or believe me so we can get a jump on him,” he looked out the window, trying to remember the steps to take. “I need you to go through any family papers you have. Go through Luke’s papers. Find grandma’s chest. You need to tell me what happened between them, why he would be after Ben Kenobi and Sheev Palpatine. At first I thought that it was just political, but there has to be more. And look for the name Vader. Maybe someone he went to medical school with.”

“How did you know he was a doctor? I hardly knew that.”

He shrugged. “It’s something I finally figured out. Go. Be careful. Don’t take dad’s car, that thing is so damned obvious.”

“Fine, fine,” she muttered to herself. “I’ll call you later.”

“Good. Use this number.”

Returning to the station, he sighed. “There’s still something that we’re missing. If we find where he’s taking them, I think we can catch him there. I have an idea but it…it’s not enough.”

“What are you thinking?” She asked.

“He’s been following us, now let’s follow him.”

Taking the back way to the lab, they were greeted by a sheepish Bebe and a fairly exhausted looking Dameron.

“Okay, spill. What did you do to their phones?” Poe demanded.

Kylo and Rey handed them their phones and she quickly picked at the SIM cards. She slid it out the first, then the second and nodded, looking astonished.

“This…this looks like something I know how to do. But Poe, I really don’t remember doing this. This couldn’t have been me,” she was shaking her head, already looking chastised by her boss.

He rubbed the back of his neck. “Just…okay. I think that you should go home. We’ll talk about this later.”

She meekly left and he turned to the detectives.

“Should we disable them?”

Kylo shook his head. “That would just tip him off. We’ll leave them here and if you have time, take them out of the station and make him think we’re working on the case. Do you have anything that we could use to track him? Something small that he wouldn’t notice?”
Poe nodded, understanding what he was thinking. “We’ve got these GPS trackers that we plant in cars from time to time. It’s pretty accurate, but once you get close it will be basically perfect. I’ll go get one. I know a guy.”

Alone in the lab with her, he nodded to himself. He hated the feeling of being only with his thoughts and was thankful to have her there as a distraction. She still looked at him with sympathetic eyes whenever he stopped to think and drifted off into a memory. He caught ghost memories at every turn, like the figures from the previous days were just out of the corner of his eyes. He needed to keep moving and acting or else lose himself in the dark corners of his mind.

Rey glanced at her phone as it buzzed to life. “Rose says she got your guy, but no one else has shown up. They’re on high alert. She said that Holdo left right after we did, crying.”

“Good,” he still felt bitter about her getting the drop on them. This could work. They’d stopped enough things that Anakin might be alone, with no one left to work with. Maul was still out there, but he’d be the one to take the boy.

“I’m going to call Kristina. Tell her that we’re going to take her son…” he slowed down, reaching for the phone. Where could they take him? He touched on a long-ago memory. Rey had mentioned the aquarium. That’s where they had to go. “We’re going to the aquarium. He’ll like that.”

She shook her head in agreement. “We should go soon.”

He called the Jinns. Kristina sounded tired when she answered.

“Hello?”

“Hello, Mrs Jinn. This is Detective Kylo Ren from the NYPD. We spoke this morning…”

“Kylo? My son has been talking about you all morning after you called. How do you know my son?”

“We’ve…we’ve met before. At his school, when we did a presentation. I have…I have a bit of a strange request,” he winced, looking at Rey. This was going to be awkward. “Can we take your son to the aquarium? You can see our IDs, but we need to talk to him and I think I owe him something special.”

“That’s…I’ll…I’ll ask him.”

The phone was silent for a few minutes. “He says that he’d really like that.”

“Can we borrow your car?”

“I…okay. He really wants to. I really don’t get what’s going on. But as long as we can see your IDs when you get here,” she sounded suspicious, but they were in.

Dameron returned as he hung up the phone. He handed them a small disk.

“It’s already activated. The battery is good for twenty-four hours. Look, this has been a crazy morning. I still don’t know what to do about Bebe, but I guess we’ll figure that out later, right? Tomorrow.”

“Yeah, tomorrow,” he took the device and handed it to Rey, brushing their hands lightly. He had to keep touching her to remind him of what day he was in and not fade into a distant memory of a day that had happened for him, but not for her. “We’ll call you when the boy has it.”
The building was still relatively quiet, but he was thankful to leave and get on with the day. He briefly stopped at the captain’s office, giving him a firm look.

“We have a lead sir,” he said. “But I really think we should have greater security today, at the house.”

Tekka eyed him. “We have three suspects already in custody, your strange homeless man and the guy that just got taken in from the courthouse, along with the nutjob with a dozen hit and run warrants. Plus a fake kidnapping. To say the least, I agree. Be careful, detectives.”

He nodded and he finally started to feel like he could handle this day, somehow. He needed to find where he was taking them and he was determined to not let Quirin or Rey die again. Focusing on the day kept him from falling back into bad memories.

The cab ride to the Jinns felt routine at this point and he couldn’t think that way. This was a new day and they had new chances. Rey rubbed his knee, bringing him from his thoughts.

“This is going to work, right?”

“Yes. Rey, I can’t tell you this enough times. I’m sorry for being a bad partner to you before. If you could just…forget that person I was, things will be okay. I love you and I need you. This…the previous today was so hard and I need to forget it,” he paused. “You’re perfect. I want this to be over so we can get on with our lives.”

“I…you’re so different today, Kylo,” she shook her head. “I can’t begin to imagine all that you’ve been through. But I trust you. Let’s go stop this man.”

He nodded and they pulled up to the Jinn house. They knocked at the door and Quirin opened it, grinning brightly at them.

“Hi! Are we going to Albany again?”

His parents stood behind him, eyeing them carefully. “No, bud, today we’re going to go look at some sharks and fish. If it’s okay with your parents.”

Mats sighed. “I don’t know how you know are son, but he’s been happier today than he’s been all week. Can I see your badges?”

They showed their IDs as Quirin took Rey’s hand looking up at her smiling. “Hi.”

“Hi, I’m Rey,” she greeted.


She blushed, turning to his parents. “Thank you for trusting us with him.”

Kristina handed him the car keys and gently nodded. It was time to start this part of the day. Give Quirin some happy memories before he gets snatched from his own home.

The drive back into the city was filled with Rey answering Quirin’s questions about the loop. Kylo just focused on the road, trying to avoid getting hit by any mystery trucks and the dark corners of his mind, telling him to just run and leave everyone to their fates. He could save them. What more could he do?

In the parking lot, he sighed.
“We’re going to give you something, Quirin, so when he takes you we’ll be able to find you,” he said. “But first, let’s…let’s just have a nice day. Quirin, he’s hurt us all so much. You’re very brave to keep helping us. We’ll give it to you when we’re done, okay?”

“It’s…it’s okay. Don’t be sad. I promise, I’ll help.”

They left the car and all he could think about was the darkness in the world. How was Quirin still normal, smiling and laughing? He tried to focus on the brightness of him and Rey, but he was starting to lose his resolve. He built on the feelings of his two companions and his resolve to not let that man win.

Quirin giggled, swinging from their arms, noticing the other families making early days at the aquarium. “Are you guys gonna have kids one day? I’ll help babysit. When I’m bigger.”

Rey looked away, and he saw a blush creep down her throat.

“Maybe one day,” he smirked at the boy, fighting his memories of last night. “But not for a while. Rey doesn’t remember the other days, remember?”

He shrugged. “But you tell her, right? Mom and dad still don’t believe me.”

“Yes, he tells me,” Rey looked back to him. “And I believe him.”

He started swinging from their arms again and Kylo was reminded of the dull ache of his earlier gunshot wounds and other injuries. The days were getting harder to feel healthy and whole. Rey glanced over as he winced.

“Quirin, it’s starting to hurt,” she said, softly shaking his hand. “And now we’re at the sharks so let’s go inside, okay?”

The boy nodded. “I’m glad we’re not at the zoo again. Do you like sharks?”

Kylo nodded. “Of course.”

“I won’t go far, but can I go look on my own?” He asked. “I promise. Like on the train.”

Kylo looked at Rey and she frowned, but nodded. They entered the darkened exhibit and Quirin ran a few feet ahead, gazing into the first tank, exclaiming at everything he saw. Rey took Kylo’s hand and sighed.

“He needed this,” she whispered. “This was a good idea.”

He nodded, squeezing lightly. “It will take him a while to find us.”

They walked as Quirin continued to explore. “Look, a sea turtle!”

“Quirin, not so loud, okay?” Kylo hushed him lightly.

He nodded, then repeated in a whisper voice. “Look, a sea turtle.”

Rey laughed and Kylo smiled again. But part of him still wondered how much time they had. “Maybe we should talk to Palpatine and Kenobi again after this. There has to more to their connection to my family.”

Sighing, Rey shook her head. “So call your mom again?”
“There’s so much on the list,” he sighed. “But we’re getting closer. And I know that this is giving you déjà vu, because you had a dream about this.”

“How did you…nevermind,” Rey watched Quirin study a manta ray, looking at it with wonder. “I almost forgot that dream. It felt so real. Maybe…maybe we’ve been here before. In another today. But…but you ever think…have you ever thought about what he said?”

“What?”

“Quirin. About kids.”

He looked down at their hands and back to her eyes. “It’s…it’s hard to be the child of a cop. I didn’t turn out that great. Two cops…that would be work. But it might be worth it.”

“You’d want a child with me?”

“Of course,” he kissed her hand, imagining a life where there wasn’t someone with dark intentions chasing them. He wanted to give her everything that she ever wanted and make her feel whole. The intensity of the previous day had left him sensitive to each feeling he sensed from her. He flashed into a daydream about a future that might never be and smiled at her. “Who else?”

Rey kept her eyes on Quirin, making sure he didn’t get too far. She looked slightly serious, thinking about what he said. “Do you ever think that how you feel, might be a part of the loop? Maybe all of this is the stress of the day. When it’s over…you might change. Since I won’t be dying every day and you can finally get back to your life.”

He wasn’t really prepared for what he heard. He looked at her and stopped walking. She glanced at him with sad eyes, before pulling him forward to keep following the boy. He’d thought about this, so many times. The guilt of manipulating her into this relationship was gnawing at the back of his mind, but he always tried to push it away. This was the only thing getting him through the day, yet it was also the thing that kept killing her. Terrible things kept happening to her that he would have to carry with him, but she’d never know. No, she needed to hear what he felt, not what he thought.

“Rey, no. This isn’t just about today. I told you, maybe not today but another today, that I can see now how you were before this. How hard you work, how much I missed by not treating you like a real partner…there’s so much more to my feelings than just today,” he kissed her forehead. “I promise. I love you. All of you: the flaws, the strengths. I’m not a whole person without you. He’s starting to break me and without you, then I’m lost. I hope that I can make you feel this way one day. We’ll have a real tomorrow together. Soon.”

“I…” her eyes trailed after Quirin, then gave him a long look. “As…as long as you’re sure. I believe you. We should get him some lunch and take him home. So that…so it can happen.”

They caught up to Quirin and took him again by the hand, leading him through the rest of the exhibit. There was so much more to the aquarium, but they had a schedule. The hours were ticking by. He looked at every animal and asked questions about each one as they walked through the final phase. Kylo thought more about the question. Underneath a walkway, filled with water, they let Quirin gaze up at the world around them. He squirmed out of their hands, running up to the walls to watch the animals floating around them. Kylo took Rey by the waist and gazed around them. She had a small, satisfied smile on her face when he leaned down to kiss her, grasping her to him. He deepened the kiss and felt her sigh and put her hands around his neck. This could be their future; taking their child to the aquarium. Other families were streaming by, bumping them as he held onto her, not wanting to let go. Quirin stood and giggled, turning from the fish to watch them kiss.
“You guys are gross.”

He broke the kiss to smile at the boy and held out his hand again.

“You won’t think that it’s that gross one day.”

Rey took the boy’s other hand and lightly grinned at them both.

She didn’t exactly say no, but her probing of his feelings made him wonder if there was something there. It was part of the dark thoughts, always haunting him. They were forced together in this situation and he couldn’t seem to get the day right yet. His grandfather was demanding something of him that he wasn’t ready to give into yet. But, at the same time, he’d never felt this way before about anyone. He wanted a tomorrow not just to have her remember, but to make more memories: simple breakfasts, going to a movie, working together, taking time apart. Memories of having coffee with her or dinner flooded back to him. She’d never remember those days. Just being able to text her without worrying about some man in black lurking in the background would be enough. If she wanted to keep him in her life, that is, he reminded himself.

Quirin tugged at his arm as they reached the café. “Can I get macaroni and cheese?”

The boy could read the important things in his life.

“Sure, get anything.” He shook his head, handing Rey the last of the money from his wallet. “I’m going to get a table. Rey, just get me a coffee.”

She shot him a look, but nodded. He sat not too far away, watching them order. She looked so calm, helping Quirin order and pick out something to drink. This was the future he wanted. He didn’t want to be alone anymore and he didn’t want her to keep dying and being tortured. Rey held the boy’s hand and then handed him the money, letting him pay. Maybe she wouldn’t want to stay with him. Maybe today was all they would have. Maybe he would have to die to save them. He blinked away tears at the cycle he was being put through. He couldn’t let this break him.

Sitting up, he tried to shake off the feeling when the two re-joined him. Rey passed him a coffee and a muffin, eyeing him and insisting that he eat. Quirin seemed overjoyed with his meal and started eating and chatting again. Rey ate her salad, stopping to answer his questions carefully.

“I don’t even remember what happened when it was not today,” Quirin said, almost exaggerating his tone. “It kinda sucks. I haven’t seen my friends in so long.”

“Soon,” Kylo said. “We’ll get him soon.”

Quirin nodded. “I know. It will be good to stop dying. I know now Kylo that I’m not just going to sleep. I’m dying all the time. You guys die too. That must suck.”

“Yes, it will be very good not to die,” Rey said, rubbing his shoulders.

“Don’t look sad. I know you can do it,” he smiled brightly at them. “This is really good. Mom never does it like this.”

They finished their lunch and he only ate the muffin after Rey glared at him and even prodded Quirin into giving him a look. The boy tilted his brown head and shook it. He smiled and ate the last of it.

“See? Look.” He said. It was hard to fake feeling content, but it almost felt real when he grinned at them. “You guys got me.”
Quirin laughed. “But you have…you’re big. How do you get big when you don’t eat?”

Kylo rolled his eyes. “This isn’t a normal day. On normal days, I like good food. Not so much macaroni and cheese, though.”

“But it’s sooo good,” Rey teased, making Quirin smile again.

He looked at her with a grin. They needed this. They needed not to be worried all of the time.

They slowly started their way back to the exit. Quirin wanted to see everything else, but eventually accepted that they had to get on the day. Kylo tried not the let his thoughts weigh on him as they returned to Mats and Kristina’s car. Quirin seemed a bit sad to leave, but climbed inside and let them drive him home.

Sadly, he tapped Rey’s leg before they left the parking lot. “Rey, give him the thing.”

She nodded, equally reluctant. “Right, hey Quirin? We have something for you. This will help us find you today. When…when the bad man takes you.”

She leaned back to hand him the small device. He studied it and frowned at her.

“I don’t want to go with him today,” he whined. “Can’t we go away?”

“Quirin, you promised. You have to help us,” Kylo said, pulling out into traffic. “We’ll get there in time.”

He pouted, staring at the small disc.

“Come on, Quirin,” Rey spoke softly. “We need you to help us catch him.”

He pouted further but finally nodded. “What if he takes it from me?”

“Put it in your shoe, at the bottom. Rey can help you. He doesn’t take your shoes, right?” Kylo tried to focus on driving, and was quickly failing. He just wanted to be back across town and out of traffic.

Rey nodded. “Can you do it yourself?”

Quirin had already pulled off his shoe and dropped it inside. He slipped it on, redoing the Velcro. “It doesn’t feel that bad. I won’t break it right?”

“No you won’t. You’re doing good, that’s really good.”

Rey texted Poe, asking him to check the location. He quickly replied, letting them know it was working fine. It wouldn’t tell them exactly where he was, but they could find the area and narrow it down. Better than counting, any day.

The rest of the drive was relatively silent. Kylo was lost in his thoughts about that morning and the plan. They had tricked him with the park, but he’d be back. Flashes of the intense yellow eyes brought him back to the scene in his apartment and he gripped the steering wheel. They needed this to work this time. They wouldn’t have to ask Quirin again if they found where he was taking them.

Pulling into the Jinns’ driveway, he finally felt the weight of the rest of the day settle on his shoulders. Soon, it would be back in a cab and back to the city. He turned to Rey and gave her a tight smile. She nodded and they left the car, leading Quirin up the front steps. Kristina met them at the door with a bright grin.
“Did you have a good day with the detectives?” She asked as Quirin up to her and hugged her.

“Yes!” He called. “But I need to ask Rey something.”

Kylo raised his eyebrow as Rey knelt down. The boy whispered something in her ear and she looked at him with a soft smile. She slowly bit her lip and nodded.

“I’ll do my best.”

The boy waved one last time at Kylo and ran up to his room. When he was gone, they looked at his mother with slightly firm looks. But Kylo couldn’t help but wonder what the boy had said to her.

“We…we hope that he won’t be after him the rest of the day,” he said, knowing it was a lie. “Would you like us to put a car out front?”

“No, no,” she shook her head. “He…he’ll be okay. We’ll watch him, don’t worry.”

They departed, still slightly worried about the plan. He would have to be taken, like he’d been before. They stood, waiting for their taxi and Rey hummed to herself.

“Have you figured out how you’re connected to this boy, other than the disorder, or whatever you said?” She asked. She had interrupted him, trying to turn his mind from whatever Quirin had said back to the case.

He shook his head. “I mean, he likes us. That’s something.”

She frowned. “But there has to be more. Don’t they have records at City Hall that we could look at? I mean, you’re all from New York. It would make sense to look there.”

He leaned over to kiss her deeply. “That’s why I need you. Let’s go. Give Poe a break for once and actually do our jobs.”

The cab took them to City Hall. It took some arguing with the desk clerk, but they were given access to a small records room, off to a corner on the main floor meant mostly for family researchers. He wrote down Mats and Kristina’s names, along with his father’s.

He gave Rey his father’s name and looked at it with regret. He wouldn’t be too proud of him at this point. Searching through the slow system, he let his mind drift. There were three Kristina Jinns. One was too old and one was too young. Searching further, he finally found their marriage certificate after a few more minutes. Rey was still scrolling through older files but heard her make an excited noise when she found his father’s birth certificate. The noise reminded him of making love to her on the couch, before everything went dark. Finally, he found the right document: Kristina’s birth certificate. His eyes went wide.

It finally all came full circle. He had the final piece.

“Kristina’s maiden name is Solo,” he said with a gasp. “This is…her parents names are Jonashe and Corellia.”

Rey scanned her computer, clicking quickly to the next document. “Kylo, they had the same father. Look.”

He moved to look at her monitor, looking through the names. “He had another family, look at the dates of birth and death. That explains the age gap. He…Quirin’s my what? Cousin?”
“Yeah, cousin. Do you think that he knows?”

He shook his head, saying words that he was still unsure of but wanted to believe. “Probably not. He was busy looking for connections to the disorder. But that explains what pulled me into the loop. He’s my family.”

He stood, putting his arms behind his head. How had he missed all of this? Quirin had never been a real case so they didn’t have all of these documents. But now they did. Rey stood and he hugged her gently. This day could finally come to an end once they found where the boy was taken. He was still dazed, sulking when they moved to the main entrance. He’d found another part of his family, this one on the side of the light.

“What could I do to make you happy?” Rey asked.

In the crowded lobby of City Hall, he glanced around. The ghost wound ached up his side and he just shook his head. His eyes blurred again, overlaying her living face with one in death. “I’m…I’m not sure. It’s been…Rey, I try to find a way to stay sane and I’m starting to lose it again.”

She spotted something over his shoulder and smirked. “What if we got married?”

“Don’t joke about that,” he turned and saw the sign outside the clerk’s office.

“No, I’m serious. We’re here. Let’s get married. Wouldn’t that make you happy? At least for today?” She took his hands and smiled up at him. “If we only have today, wouldn’t you do that?”

“Yes, that would…that would make me happy. Was this Quirin’s idea?”

Rey nodded and kissed him. “Then ask me, properly.”

He got down on one knee, laughing to himself as he did. “Detective Rey Niima, will you marry me?”

“Yes, Detective Kylo Ren, I will.”

She giggled, hugging him. He held her, managing a small laugh at the absurdity of the situation. They were being hunted by a madman; might as well do something insane as well. It would erase part of the lingering pain that still touched his mind every time he let his mind wander.

“I know a judge that can get us a waiver,” she smiled outside the clerk’s office. “I’ll make a call.”

It would be real. He’d forever be tied to her. “Call Maz. We need a witness.”

She openly laughed at him as they waited outside the Clerk’s Office. From one day of terror, to a day of impulsive happiness. The sorrows of that morning still pressed on him, but this was different and good. He held her hand once she was done on the phone and leaned against him.

“On any other day, this would be strange,” he said. “But it has to be you. Today, tomorrow, forever.”

Maz arrived a few minutes before a very confused law clerk showed up, papers in hand and a bewildered look on his face. Rey grinned, taking the envelope and then hugging her old friend.

“Maz, this is Kylo. We’ve only been together for one day and we’re getting married,” she said playfully.

The older woman just shook her head. “Is this a Green Card thing?”
“No, he’s my partner,” she opened the envelope. “It looks correct.”

“Well,” Maz said, reaching into her purse. “See, if these fit.”

A pair of antique wedding rings rested in her hand. Kylo picked up the larger one and slipped it on his hand. It was like it was meant for him.

“Where…where are these from?” He asked.

She shrugged. “A marriage a long time ago. Not mine, but something I picked up along the way.”

Rey fit her ring on her hand and held it up to him. They quickly removed the rings and gave them back to Maz. His heart was beating rapidly for once out of something other than terror.

The line to the clerk was short, not leaving much time to turn back. Finally at the front, they presented their IDs. He took out his real one, tucked in the back of his wallet, to match the waiver.

“All right, Mr Benjamin Lucas Solo and Miss Rey Nicole Niima. You can go in in a few minutes,” the clerk stamped their license and handed it to them. “Congratulations.”

He took her hand and they stepped inside the small adjacent room. Maz fished another thing out of her bag.

“Here.”

“I don’t need a veil, Maz,” Rey shook her head, giving Kylo a playful look. This was for him, but it was also for her. She’d met a new partner this morning, one that looks with her both with love but also sorrow. When she was trying to make him happy, she was also giving herself something.

“Yes, you do, child.”

Rey leaned down, letting the older woman fix the white lace to her head. Rey grinned at Kylo and he let himself fully go into the moment. Could this just be the last day, when everything is nearly perfect? He had a murky suspicion that it wouldn’t be that easy.

It was a short ceremony, but he didn’t need anything more than to stand across from her, holding her hands. Exchanging rings from some mystery other couple, he let his hand linger on hers. This was today’s Rey. She hadn’t felt the pain that the others had. This one was truly his. At the final word, he was told to kiss her and held her close. This could be the final day; they had all of the pieces.

Maz led them outside, insisting on taking a picture.

“Come on, there’s a bodega not far from here. Champagne! You need champagne after a wedding!”

Standing on a New York City street corner, they took turns sipping lukewarm sparkling win from a paper bag. A street musician was playing on the next corner and he took her hand, giving the bag to Maz.

“The first dance?”

She slipped her hand into his and he guided her through an impromptu slow dance. Please, let this be the last day. His phone buzzed in his pocket, interrupting their embrace.

“Mom, what have you found?”
“It’s the strangest thing. I found that old chest my mother left, the one you told me about. We must have put it in storage when we emptied the house. There’s an envelope there from her, addressed to my father. How have I never looked in here before?” He heard the confusion in her voice and wished she would focus.

“Open it. Open it now, mom.”

He heard the rustling of paper then a sigh. “This is…this can’t be right.”

“What is it? Mom, what does it say?”

“Dear Ani, This day had to end eventually. You were never going to save me. Please stop this. I love you. You must love and take care of our children. Don’t hurt anyone else. Kenobi and Palpatine are good boys. Leave them be. Think of our children. All my love, Padmé.” She paused. “What does that mean, Ben?”

“God dammit.” He shouted, shifting the phone from his ear to yell.

“Don’t yell at me.”

“They knew him,” he shook his head. “This is something personal. He’s not just doing this for power; this is revenge. Mom, find anything else. Something that mentions them again. A diary. A picture. Something.”

He heard his mother rustling papers. Rey shifted to look at him, putting her arms on his hips, giving him a steadying look. He met his eyes and tried to accept her insistence to calm down. His mother gave a successful laugh and the tenseness in his shoulders loosened.

“There…here’s her diary. I remember seeing this as a kid. Mrs Organa put it on my shelf and I…”

“Go to the end, when she died,” he was so frustrated that he wasn’t there. He was worried about her, but they couldn’t leave the city and their duty to Quirin, Poe and the others. She was flipping through the pages and time seemed to drag.

“Here. Here’s something. She talks about his work at some specialist clinic and how he’s been distracted during her pregnancy. Anakin is away for work again today, some medicine course. I’m too tired to read. There is so much left to do before the children arrive. I wish I was back at work. I can’t wait for Anakin to meet his children, but I also need to be back at work. Being pregnant isn’t what it’s cracked up to be! A local boy is coming by tomorrow to help me put up the curtains. His friend is visiting from the UK for the weekend. I will find work for them both.”

“Is there more?”

She turned the page. “This…this is from the day she died. I can hardly read it. Not the boys’ fault I fell. They didn’t know they broke the ladder. Hurts everywhere. Anakin will never forgive them. He keeps telling me that he will save me somehow. Don’t know what that means. Feeling tired. Love you, Luke and Leia. Take care of your father.”

He heard his mother’s gasp and shut his eyes.

“Ben…did they…did they kill her and don’t remember? Did she fall and that…and then we were born?”

Kylo exhaled, long and hard. “Repeat the day enough and you can make people forget. He…he must have found children from that clinic and started killing them to repeat the day, trying to save
her. But he couldn’t. Accidents aren’t controllable. He couldn’t get at them until now, when he found these children and me. Mom, I’m sorry.”

“It…it’s okay. I’m going to keep reading. I will let you know if I…if I find anything else. Take care of yourself.”

“You too.”

He hung up the phone and met Rey’s intense eyes.

“She thinks that they caused the accident that brought on my grandmother’s labour. He’s been planning this for years and finally had the right opportunity when he found the database and the children,” he said, finally understanding what was at play here. “He doesn’t care who’s in charge. Just that he gets his revenge and ruins their careers. Holdo is already corrupted; it won’t take much to link that to the two candidates. Their names will be ruined and they won’t even know who did it.”

Rey looked at Maz and gave her a small smile. “Enjoy the rest of the bottle, Maz. We have our leads. And why he’s doing this.”

“I…I’m sorry for yelling,” he gave Maz and Rey a guilty look. “My mother…she frustrates me.”

Maz just shook her head. “Well, go get your bad guy. And I will enjoy this bottle.”

They watched her toddle off, humming the street musicians tune to herself, and he turned to Rey again.

“We just need Quirin’s location. This is the final day. It has to be,” he cupped her cheek. “Now you’re stuck with me forever.”

“I wouldn’t have said yes if I didn’t want to be,” she stepped closer. “Kylo, this day…I still don’t understand everything that’s happening. We will have to have a very long conversation once we get Quirin and stop him.”

“I love you.”

“I know.”

He kissed her again and they returned to the station, again, to check on any updates there. He thought darkly about having a meeting with Hux but that would only drag him down to his despicable level. Revenge would be ending this day.

Poe saw them walking in, holding hands and raised a long eyebrow.

“Did you two have a productive afternoon?”

He raised his hand. “We got married.”

“I swear. I swear to God,” Dameron just shook his head. “And you didn’t even invite me? All the work I’ve done, running over the goddamned city all day?”

“Have you heard anything? From Quirin, or Elias?”

Dameron nodded, putting a file folder onto his desk. “Elias is fine, thank God. He’s really all I have and just the thought of anything happening to him…I don’t know what I’d do. Your boy is still at home.”
He gestured towards the laptop in the corner. He saw the familiar address and nodded.

“It will happen soon,” he sighed, sitting down. The thing keeping him from drifting down dark corners was the weight of the ring on his finger.

Rey disappeared, returning quickly with coffee and a small sandwich from the vending machine. He eyed it as she passed him half. They ate and waited. Sitting still made him anxious and he kept drifting into the previous day. Being in the lab with them. Leaving without Poe. Being at the rec centre with Finn. Leaving without him. He couldn’t make his thoughts stop.

“Rey, I need to move and do something,” he shook his head. “There’s…there’s too much.”

“Go to the crash room,” Dameron shrugged. “Your leg shaking is interrupting my work.”

He eyed him. “You’re doing the crossword puzzle.”

“This is also work,” he grinned, slapping the paper.

Rey followed him and he paced in the hallway. “What if it doesn’t work? What if he finds it?”

Rey took his arm and he motioned to the room off to the side. They sat down in the familiar space again. Well, at least it was familiar to him.

“Kylo,” she said. “If this doesn’t work, then we try again. We know everything now. We know what to say to him to get him to stop. And then we kill him. That’s the only way, right?”

He sadly shook his head. “There…there’s another way.”

“How?”

Kylo took her hand. “He…he’s already killed me. But in some way, he needs to say or do something before…before he kills me to end the loop. Maybe that will end this for good, if you get Quirin and run.”

“I’m not leaving you,” she instantly shook her head. “You’re never going to do that.”

She tucked a hair behind his ear and he leaned into the touch, looking at her with soft eyes. She bent down to kiss him, moving off of the opposite bunk onto his lap. He ran his hands through her hair, enjoying the feeling of her firm thighs around him. She was here again, alive and wanting him. There were many hours left in the day, but their time together could come to an end that night. He needed to replace the horrors of the previous night. He needed her to comprehend what she meant to him. She also needed him, her hands playing with his hair, light nails scraping his scalp. He started to remove his suit jacket and Rey sat back with a grin. She dashed to the door and locked it.

“God, I want you,” he whispered as she returned to his lap, instantly grinding against him. “There are so many parts of the day that I’m getting tired of. But this, being with you, I’m never going to get tired of that.”

She took off her suit coat and unbuttoned her shirt. He helped her, running his hands up her smooth stomach. Meeting her eyes, he reached to undo her bra.

“Kylo, if anything happens, remember me like this,” she said, stilling his hands. “I don’t know how you’re doing this, but you make me feel so loved and cared about. I haven’t felt that in so long.”
“Nothing’s going to happen to you,” he shook his head, undoing the clasp. “This has to be the final today. We have all of the pieces.”

She kissed him again, shifting to sit beside him to reach for his shirt and pants. The days had been so long, but this sweetness was always too short. Standing, she helped him out of his clothes. The light touches they exchanged made him almost forget where they were and what day it was. Her body was whole and beautiful again, curved at the hips but still thin and strong. It wasn’t the broken and violated one from last night. He had to be here, in this today, and put that one in a box in his mind and lock it away. She slipped out of her trousers and panties in one quick movement. Standing back, she sat on the bed, looking up at him.

“Stop telling me I’m beautiful, when you are too,” she said, running her hand up his thigh to reach his erection. She stroked him lightly and he briefly shut his eyes. She sat up, taking him into her mouth. He stepped away and she pouted before he nudged her aside to sit next to her on the bed.

“You’ll always be the more attractive one in this relationship,” he took in her body with one long look. She turned to kiss him, lips warm and wanting, climbing onto his lap again. She met his eyes, fitting their bodies together. “Are you ready?”

“Yes.”

She pressed down and he entered her warmth again, not ready for the emotions it would bring back. He gasped, kissing her firmly to stop the tears that threatened to spill down his cheeks. She rolled her hips, riding him, gasping when he grabbed her thighs. He had taken this from them. He had hurt her in a way that no one ever should be hurt. He shook his head, nudging her off his lap to lay down on the bed. He kissed her, quickly filling her again, thriving in the safety of the room and the warmth of being inside her. She gasped and wrapped her legs around him, driving him even deeper.

“So beautiful,” he whispered, breaking his mouth away to kiss up her jaw as he thrust into her.

“God, Kylo, yes,” she bit her lip, her hips matching his movements in careful timing, rolling in time with his body.

He was close, so close, lost in her body when an echo of her despondent cries ghosted through his mind. He came, but then sobbed, almost collapsing on top of her. She was stunned, but slowly guided him to her side. He wept onto her shoulder as she ran her hands across his back, trying to calm him down. He was back to how he felt that morning and it just tore through him.

“Shh, Kylo, it’s okay. It’s okay. I’m here,” she whispered, kissing his forehead. “We’ll get through this.”

He finally felt the bitter emotions subside and nuzzled her neck, feeling how damp it was. “I’m sorry.

“It…it’s okay,” she kissed him lightly. “We’ll get through this. Okay?”

He wanted to tell her, but couldn’t give her that burden. She slowly moved away and started to redress, looking at him carefully. She tossed him the box of tissues that she’d used to clean up. He tried to give her a small smile and she returned it. Well, he messed that up.

They quietly redressed then slipped off to the washroom. He mostly just stared at himself in the mirror, daring his eyes to change colour.

When they rejoined Poe, he motioned at the computer. “He’s on the move. Looks like by a car. It
will hop around a bit until they slow down or stop.”

He grabbed Rey’s hand and felt his pulse quicken. Where was he taking him?

It was late in the afternoon by the time the blip stopped moving. Dameron double-checked the location, then wrote out the coordinates. He pulled up another map, and looked up exactly where this madman had committed all of his crimes. He might kill Quirin out of spite, thinking they weren’t looking for him or waiting for him at the benefit. But now they knew, and if there was another today, he would know again.

“It’s out near the Tarrytown. It looks isolated, off the parkway,” he shook his head. “You’ll have to get closer to know exactly.”

He looked at the clock. “We should get a car and find exactly where he is. We’ll have to wait until he’s left for the fundraiser, later tonight. And if Holdo has tipped him off and this goes wrong, then we know exactly what to do now. And I’ll just handcuff her to her desk next time and smash her phone on her head. But right now, we need to go. It will take more than hour to get there. Poe, thank you for all of your help. Hopefully, we’ll see you tomorrow.”

Everyone was still alive. Rey had texted Finn and Rose and they were fine. Everyone downstairs was still alive.

“Mundi, we need to borrow your car,” he said as they walked by their desks. “I’ll bring it back.”

The other detective eyed them. “Where the hell have you two been all day?”

“Just living life.”

He snatched the keys off the desk and kept walking, hoping he could fake a good mood so she would stop looking at him with careful eyes.

“You don’t have to pretend for me,” she said when they were in the car and he was fiddling with the GPS.

“I…I know,” he shook his head. “I’m…I’m really sorry about what happened. Yesterday was a hard day.”

“What happened?”

He just shook his head. “I’m really trying to forget. It’s something I’ll deal with once we end this damned day.”

She nodded, although she didn’t look satisfied.

“Tell me about a nicer day,” she said. “One of these todays that didn’t feel awful.”

“The endings are always painful, but we’ve had good moments too. I’m never going to be perfect, but you’ve made me better. I’m not angry at everyone anymore. I see now how hard I was to work with and it makes me hate myself,” he shook his head. “You shouldn’t have to be worried about your career because they teamed us up.”

She licked her lips and looked away. “I was…I was about to give up on you. And I never give up. If this day didn’t happen, then I never would have gotten to know who you really are. That’s…that’s a good thing from today.”
They drove through the city, falling into a comfortable silence. Almost dying and then wanting to
die out of agony still weighed on his mind. Whatever happened next, he was determined that she
would walk away and it would be after midnight. It would be her tomorrow. Rey pulled out her
notebook and started going over her notes. He caught her briefly scribbling down more
information, glancing up at him occasionally to smile.

The GPS continued to ping, more consistently as they left the main roads, into smaller and less
suburban areas. After Tarrytown, he spotted a rural road, practically hidden by trees. That’s where
the pinging was taking them. He took the cautious turn and followed the pinging. They finally
came to an aged dirt road, but with fresh tracks, leading down into a wooded area. This is what the
children had also been drawing. This is where he took them to snuff out their lives once he was
done with them.

He glared down the road as they drove by where the pinging was coming from. He was itching to
get to Quirin, but was worried at the same time. This was the closest they had ever come. Rey’s
hand was on his, her wedding ring resting on his knuckle. He picked it up and kissed her hand.

“Thank you,” he said. “Thank you for everything.”

They parked the car down the road, in a small area of heavy bush. Hidden by trees, he took steady,
even breaths. They would get Quirin and then wait for him. Sitting in the car and doing nothing
made him tense up. Night slowly fell and Rey took his hand when a pair of headlights turned out of
the driveway. The car took the turn and went in the direction opposite of them. They both exhaled.

He looked at her and nodded. “We can’t get separated. If the last accomplice is here, we work
together.”

She nodded, readying her weapon. They drove up the long and bumpy road and he quickly kissed
her before they stepped out of the car and towards their goal. This was what it was coming to.

The shack wasn’t much to look at: small, but still relatively intact. There was no one around for
more than a mile. The dirt road had fresh tracks, but there was no other vehicle there. There was
nothing except the shack and the woods. But Quirin’s tracker was inside. He gave Rey a quick nod
and they exited the car. Maul had to have been the one to help him, since they’d stopped the
others: the truck, Hux, and the homeless man. Bebe and Holdo were also out. This was the end
game.

The wind whipped at his face in the night air.

He took out his gun and they started for the door. Covering either side, they checked through the
window. It was dark, but Quirin had to be in there. Rey moved to his side as he opened the door.

The distant light from the moon illuminated the single shoe sitting in the middle of the empty
room.

No.

He pulled Rey inside and they scanned for anyone or anything. It was empty, the wooden floor
lightly stained with long-ago dried blood.

“Looking for someone?”

Anakin stood in the doorway, his back lit by the far away moonlight.

“Where is he?”
“Oh, he’s dead,” Anakin stepped forward to turn on the light. “Along with his parents. Nice try with the tracking device. You’re finally getting clever. I never thought you’d ever get there. You mostly run around and let everyone else do the thinking for you.”

The lights on, Anakin gestured up. Hanging from the ceiling, was Quirin’s lifeless body.

With a shout, Kylo shot at Anakin, catching him in the shoulder. Anakin only slightly flinched.

“Remember, Ben. If you kill me now, he’s gone forever.”

Kylo felt renewed tears coming to his eyes. He glanced at Rey and then back at Anakin.

“Why are you doing this to me? To us?”

“I’m an old man now. The loop, it keeps you younger, but it won’t last forever. But with you, then we could live forever. Just imagine. You could have everything. Not just some British trash, but anyone. It’s amazing, Ben,” he grinned at Rey. “How are you feeling after what Hux did to you? He’s a nightmare to work with - so many mommy issues.”

Her face firmed at his taunt, her gun trained on him.


“Padmé never got to live, so why should she?” Anakin sneered. “Either choose to live forever or die here. Or else risk another tomorrow. Maybe you’ll get lucky again.”

He lights clicked out and he instantly reached for Rey. Something heavy hit him and he heard her scream. Someone or something had slashed at his leg. He fell to the ground and the lights blinked on again. Maul had a knife to Rey’s throat. Despite the tears streaming down her face and the bloodied cut across her chest, she looked at him with resolve.

Anakin loomed over him. The man’s yellow eyes seemed to darken before he brought down the gun against his face. Kylo couldn’t move, stunned by the pain. Everything hurt, from his inside out.

“You need to end this soon, Ben. I can’t wait forever. Decide!”

“Go to hell,” he mumbled.

“Wrong answer!”

The next blow sent everything into black.

He couldn’t move as he stirred awake. It was dark and cold. He tasted blood and coughed, trying to get to his feet. He wanted to, but he couldn’t. Glancing over his shoulder, he shuddered, feeling nausea roll through him. They’d cut her throat so deep that her head was barely attached to her body. He had to get away from here. He couldn’t look at her like this.

Limping, he finally pulled himself to his feet. He collapsed in the driver’s seat of the car. He stared blankly at the shack, not really knowing if he had enough emotions left to drive back to the city. It was just after midnight. How long had she been dead? He tried to remember the timeline but it faded in and out. What changes had they made today? What did Anakin know and not know?

He numbly reached for Rey’s notebook on the passenger side. His bloody fingers smudged the pages. His wedding ring glittered in the moonlight. He shook his head, pushing the pain away
again. Okay, so where were they? He flipped through the pages, noticing tears start to smudge the writing. He didn’t even feel them dripping from his eyes.

He reached the final page and noticed that it wasn’t part of the plan. It was a letter to him. When did she have time to write this?

Dear Kylo,

You’ve already told me how this day will end. I’m not sure when or why it will end like this, but in a way it feels good to know. We will find a way to end this monster and stop this. You have the clues and you can do it, even without me by your side. I’m so thankful that I got to know you and all we’ve shared today. Stop telling yourself you are not a good person. I’ve felt alone for so long and today, for the first time, I felt cared for and loved. I want you to keep going, no matter when I die today. Find him and get some answers. Kill him if you have to. You can go on without me. For me and the children. And yourself.

Love, your wife (always, today, tomorrow, forever),

Rey

He touched the page, tracing her name and her words. The echoes of his grandmother’s letter were sketched on that page. This wasn’t the last time. He would get answers but he wouldn’t win.

“Okay, Rey,” he said, looking up at the shack. “I will.” He couldn’t bring her back from that day. But at least he had another today, another chance.
Day 22

Chapter Summary

Kylo wakes up too early and has to race to save the day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Day 22

Kylo awoke with the expected jolt and shiver, but nothing else was at it should be. For a moment, in the darkness, he thought he was back in one of the distant hotel rooms. Why was it still mostly dark out? He took a panicked breath and tasted dull iron. His face was wet. Wiping at his nose, he saw that his hand was stained a deep shade. His nose was bleeding. He hated waking up injured. That bastard. The distinct ache of his nearly broken nose spread over his face as he settled into the abrupt morning.

Glancing down at the clock, his breathing quickened. It was 5.04. It was too early. Rey would be getting ready for her run and Finn would be meeting one of the masked men. But now he could get to them before he could do anything. He was awake and they were vulnerable. Anakin would be able to control the loop from the start. No.

He quickly grabbed his weapon from beside the bed and rushed from his apartment. First Finn, then Rey. From what she’d said, he’d be able to stop both of them from meeting their ends too early in the day.

On the street, the sun was just starting to rise. His body ached but he tried to ignore it. There — The Post delivery truck was idling and Finn was grabbing stacks of papers, standing near the edge of the truck bed. On the other side of the street, approaching rapidly, was the stocky form of the tattooed man. Instead of a note, he had a gun clearly pointed at Finn’s back.

“Stop, police!” He shouted, aiming at the assassin. The man turned and managed one shot and Kylo felt pain spread throughout his shoulder. Getting shot woke him up even more and he tried to push down the burning, pulsing sensation.

“Get down!”

Finn’s eyes were wide as he glanced between the two, before quickly dropping to the bed of the truck. Kylo fired twice, wincing at the recoil, but he caught the man in both shoulders. A third shot in rapid succession knocked the gun from his hand. The man screamed and charged at him, tackling him to the ground. Kylo had the upper hand, despite being shot, and quickly flipped him onto his back, subduing and cuffing him. That was one good thing about always waking up in the same damned clothes.

“Holy shit, what…what the hell is happening?” Finn was getting to his feet and the truck driver and a small group of early morning risers started to crowd around.
“Call 911,” Kylo instructed. “Tell them that it’s Detective Kylo Ren and I’ve got one of the suspects. One of the child killers. Do it now. Finn, I need you to keep him down until they get here. I need to go.”

“Go? Where do you need to go? How do you know my name?”

“I… I don’t have time. I’ll be back. Make sure he doesn’t go anywhere.” He stood and kicked the man hard in the side.

Finn hopped off the truck and stood beside him. “Do I just… hold him down?”

“Yes, press on the bastard’s shoulder with your foot,” he slowed his breathing. “Don’t be afraid. He was here to kill you and me. And my partner. But I really, really need to go.”

It had been over in minutes, but he still didn’t have the timeline down. It was too early and he was in a great deal of pain. Finn carefully stood over the man, joined by a few other workers from the area. A few were on their phones, clearly talking to the police. Good. They’d be there soon.

He took off after giving Finn another careful nod.

It told him something about New Yorkers that a bloodied man, running down the street carrying a gun, didn’t turn that many heads. Why did she have to live so close, but still so far?

He got to Rey’s door, out of breath, just as she was exiting.

“Kylo! Oh my god!” She dropped her bag and put her hands on his shoulders. “What… why are you bleeding? What are you doing here?”

He waved his hand, taking mouthfuls of air. “Get inside. Just… get inside.”

She helped him into the lobby of her building. He was having trouble seeing and desperately needed to get himself under control.

“You… need to go to the hospital,” she gently touched the bleeding gunshot wound. “How… what’s going on?”

He shook his head, resting against the wall. “Rey, we don’t have time today. We need to go upstairs. He could be watching.”

He stubbornly moved to stand and she reached to help him, still with a confused look stuck on her face. In the elevator, once the doors slid shut, he finally was able to catch his breath. She pressed her hand on the wound and he hissed in pain.

“Kylo, please tell me what’s going on. You’re scaring me.”

He shook his head. “One of the suspects tried to shoot your friend Finn. I think he was going to come after you next or else the other one is after you. Anakin, my grandfather, he’s the man who’s doing this all of this.”

“Is he the one that shot you?” The elevator dinged and he had to hold her back from the entrance. No one was there.

He shook his head as she resisted him pushing her aside. “No… that was the other one. He’s the one that broke my nose.”

“Come on, let’s go to my apartment and I’ll call in to the captain,” she lightly took his arm and
guided him to her door. Once inside, he again locked the door and took a long look around her apartment. “It’s okay, Kylo. No one else is in here.”

“You never know.”

She brought him to her couch and she disappeared into the washroom, returning with a first aid kit and a warm washcloth. She held the cloth to his nose, until he took it. Her hands worked on the buttons of his shirt and he started to feel lightheaded. He wanted to close his eyes, but was afraid he’d pass out.

“Call and make sure they have the other one. Outside my apartment,” he winced as she removed his shirt.

“God, you’re covered in bruises,” she mumbled before putting careful pressure on his shoulder. “I think that I can stop the bleeding, but you still need to get this looked at.”

“It’s…it’s no big deal,” he shook his head. “As long as you’re safe.”

“Someone beat you up and shot you, and you’re worried about me,” she frowned, carefully taping a thick roll of gauze to his wound. “Tell me what’s happening.”

He removed the towel. He’d finally stopped bleeding somewhat there, at least. “It’s like this, Rey. I…I’m living the same day. I’ve been living the same day for over twenty days or more and this isn’t the first time that everything really changed. Yesterday, the last today, we found where he takes the children. We saw him again. We almost stopped him. We’ve been getting closer and closer and today, I woke up almost an hour earlier than I’m supposed to. He’s making it a game now, just doing it to break me. I’ve woken up in worse shape than this, believe me. He wants me to make a damned choice, but the only choice we have is to kill him. We need to go there again, but I don’t think he can take them anywhere else. There’s something about that place and we need to figure out what.”

She sat back, still looking at the bullet wound before looking up to his bloodied face. “None of that made sense. What do you mean that you’re living the same day? How is that possible?”

“Look, Rey, I know that none of this makes sense. And I know you think I’ve been a horrible partner to you, but something is happening to me today and I need your help. Please. Just trust me,” he said, reaching for her hand. “Please.”

She met his eyes and was about to speak when her phone rang. “Yeah, Niima? Yes, he’s…he’s here. We’re going to need a bus. I’ll bring him downstairs.” She hung up and shook her head. “That was Mundi. They’ve got your suspect and are taking him to hospital.”

“Good, thank God,” he sunk down into the sofa. “So that only leaves Hux and the homeless man. And the truck driver. And Holdo and Bebe, fuck.”

“Okay, I still have so many questions, but let’s just say that I believe you,” she eyed him. “What do we do to save the children? Kylo, we have to stop him.”

He nodded. “We can’t save the Windu girl, but we can stop him from killing the next boy. The children are in the loop too and he needs them to stay in the day. The reason why I’m in today’s loop is because I’m related to the final child. We’re tied together through this disorder we all had when we were infants. The kids, they get burnt out from repeating the days and can’t keep going. Eventually, he breaks them and then he has to start over again, in the next today. The last boy… he’s my cousin. He won’t give up, but since I’m in the loop too…that’s another problem for him.
He can…he has to use me, but still tries with the boy.”

“Why would he want to repeat the day?”

Frowning, he shook his head. “That’s…he’s after the DA and his opponent for something that happened a long time ago. He’s trying to ruin their careers because he thinks that they caused his wife’s death.”

She sighed. “Okay, so let’s talk more at the hospital. I’m going to go get changed. You’ve really messed up my morning routine.”

“Sorry about that.”

She eyed him, moving away from the couch to her bedroom. He gazed around her apartment and sighed. He looked down at his hand and he could still feel the faint pressure of the gold band from the previous day. Sorrow replaced the adrenaline that he had been running on. He didn’t like getting shot, but he liked being there. Why did he wake up with the same injuries from the previous day again? That didn’t sit well with him. His ribs ached from some distant injury. He hoped that Quirin wasn’t in any pain. It was still too early to deal with anything, but if Anakin had a head start on them, all of his previous plans wouldn’t work. He wished that there were a manual to all of this because after so many weeks, he was tired of running in circles.

“Hey,” Rey called from the kitchen, changed in a different pants suit than the previous day. “We should go downstairs.”

“Yeah,” he stood up, swaying slightly. He started to put his shirt back on and slowly buttoned it. His hands felt weak and she sighed, moving to help him.

“I used to like this shirt,” she said.

“My shirt?”

“Yeah, you wear it quite often,” she left the top few buttons undone. “Kylo, you…why are you here?”

“I told you, he’s after you,” he closed his eyes. “I…this isn’t the first time I’ve woken up injured like this. Before, in the beginning, everything was reset. But it’s getting worse and I’m more tired now. I thought I died yesterday, but I must have just passed out. It feels worse when you die.”

“What do you mean die? What are you talking about?”

He met her eyes and didn’t want to tell her again, but had to. She had to help him get through all this again. “Rey, I can die in the loop, or at least I could. I have to be more careful now. I don’t always die, but you do. I’ve…I’ve seen you die in so many ways that I’ve almost lost count. Terrible things have happened to you and it’s destroying me. It never gets easier to think that one day, I’ll wake up and you might not be there.”

“But you…you act like you hate me. You’ve been trying to ignore me since we became partners,” she blinked. “What’s changed?”

“Everything, but at the same time, nothing. We…we’ve shared so many beautiful days and memories. You never remember and I have to tell you what we’ve shared. I…I’ve fallen in love with you and. And there’s something else,” he paused. “Don’t get mad.”

“Why would I get mad?”
“We’re married.”

“She’s married?!”

“I asked you not to get mad.”

She threw her hands up in the air. “I would punch you if you weren’t shot.”

“To be fair, it was your idea,” he looked down at his feet. “It was nice. I didn’t know your middle name was Nicole.”

She grabbed his uninjured arm and forced him towards the door. “I swear to God…come on.”

He gave her a small grin. “Yes, dear.”

“Ugh! Don’t!”

She was still frowning at him when she guided him through the lobby out of the apartment. The ambulance and the Captain were waiting for them and Tekka looked at him with wide eyes.

“What happened this morning, Ren?” He asked. “We get a call that you’ve taken down our suspect and then just took off.”

“I was shot,” he gestured. “It was a bit of a stressful moment.”

“I really look forward to reading your report,” he shook his head. “Go to the hospital and then come back and brief me on what you know about the man who shot you.”

“Yes, sir.”

Rey followed him into the ambulance and glared at him. Pulling out her notebook, she eyed him. “Okay, why don’t you start from the beginning?”

The attendant was checking his eyes before moving to the gunshot wound.

“The first day, the first loop day that I realised, I messed everything up. I thought we could catch him when he dumped the girl, but that didn’t work. There was another time that we tried that and it worked better — he doesn’t drop the kids himself. He’s more…watching and making sure that his accomplices don’t mess up,” he winced as the attendant removed the gauze. “But we’ve talked to her mother before and that’s when I figured out that there was something that the kids knew. We’ve talked to all of the other families, and it’s all the same. The kids were depressed or angry or sick leading up to the day that they were taken. All of them saw at least one of the killers. And I have the same disorder as kids.”

She tapped her notebook, studying her notes. “You say all of this like it’s really happening.”

“It is happening to me,” he nodded. “And to them.”

“So the last boy, why do you think he’s special?”

He shook his head. “My other grandfather, who was just a normal scumbag not a murderous one, had a second family. His mother is my aunt, even though we’re basically the same age. We didn’t figure that out until recently.”

“Because we’re too busy getting married?” She shot back.
He smirked. “It was only one time.”

She actually gave him a slow smile. “Kylo, why did we get married?”

The attendant was giving them a strange look before sitting back and rolling his eyes. “I honestly don’t want to know what you two are talking about. You’re probably going to need surgery when we get to the hospital, but I’ve stopped the bleeding.”

He ignored him and gave Rey a serious look. “I was having a bad couple of days. You surprised me. Quirin told you to do it.”

“What happened at the end of that day?”

He looked passed her, staring at the doors of the ambulance. “They slit your throat and hanged him. You were gone again; you died when I was unconscious. Again before midnight. You always die before midnight and I can’t stop it.”

She took a deep breath and closed her eyes. “You’re making it really hard not to believe you.”

“We’ve also had good days, Rey, trust me. That day was mostly a nice day,” he really wanted to touch her, but the attendant gave him a look every time he tried to move.

“So the only way to end the loop is to kill him?” She looked back her notebook. “There’s no other way?”

“Yes, so we really only have one option,” he nodded as the ambulance pulled up to the hospital. “He…he wants me to join him in the loop. Or, he has to kill me in some special way. I’m not doing either of those things.”

The EMT walked them inside and he quickly scanned for anyone they knew. Rey gave their information, watching him scan the relatively empty waiting area. He didn’t like being in such a public space and was thankful when they were quickly led to the back. The connection to health care was another thing he had to talk to Rey about. How he searched the database. How did they miss all that before?

The nurse checked his wound and frowned. She helped him into a clean scrubs top and quickly wrote something on his chart. “You might be here a while. We’ll have to get x-rays to see where the bullet is. And you have a head injury. Your partner might as well go back to work.”

“She’s not going anywhere,” he shook his head.

Rey just sighed. “And I guess I’m his wife, so I might as well stay.”

The nurse raised an eyebrow and left the examination room, mumbling under her breath. Finally alone, he reached for her and she gently took his hand, moving to sit beside him on the examination bench. She reached up to touch the cut above his eye and exhaled, sadly.

“There’s blood in your hair.”

He nodded. “Yeah, I was pretty beat up.”

“How many times have you been shot, on the other days?” She asked, looking down to trace a circle on his hand with her thumb.

He shrugged, wincing at the pain from his shoulder. “A few times. Stabbed a few other times. I
“even shot myself once.”

“Because I died?”

“Yes.”

Shaking her head, she looked away from him to watch the doorway. “I know I didn't get to pick you, and it’s been hard, especially with this case…But you’re my partner…I have to trust you. Kylo, you’ve never talked to me like this before.”

“Thank you,” he kissed her lightly on the cheek. “I’m…I’m sorry this is all happening so early. Normally, we have a little time to talk about the day. I didn’t really mean to get shot.”

“Look, Kylo, it’s a little strange to me how you’re talking. Not just what you’re saying, because that’s another level of weird, but you’re talking to me like a real person. Like you really do care about me,” she bit her lip and shook her head. “It’s hard to forget who you were yesterday and just…I don’t know. How can I be together with you?”

“I know, and I’m so sorry about that. We…sometimes it goes too fast,” he again thought about their first time together and how he’d acted. “Rey, I know about what happened when you were a teenager. I’m sorry that I didn’t know before. But what I regret most is not treating you as a real partner. You are talented and good to work with and I missed all of that by being me. But these last twenty-something days have really changed who I am. If I ever get out of this loop, I really want to have a tomorrow with you.”

“I…I must really trust you to have told you about that,” her cheeks were slightly red, her voice dropping. “Well, you also married me, so there’s that.”

She smiled again, her mood shifting slightly. “We’re not married today.”

“Well, we could get married again today. Just for fun.” He smiled back at her, enjoying the memory of kissing her at City Hall. That was a good day that he could turn to in the darkest moments. The blackness of before always loomed at the back of his mind. It was further away now, but always lurking.

“Rey, I need you to make some calls for me while they…fix me. Call Dameron, tell him that his assistant is being manipulated by the killer. A truck is going to try to take her father. Hell, it could have already happened by now. Call a car or several to her address in Brooklyn and stop him. Then, I want you to call Holdo. Threaten her that we know she’s also being used by him. Just…just act like you know what I’m talking about and convince them,” he grabbed her hand. “These are the steps that we need to take.”

She frowned and then nodded. “Okay, but we’ll talk about it after they’re done with you.”

And so the day went. There were x-rays, followed by another examination. They were really concerned that he had brain damage; well, no shit. Rey hung around, never that far away. They were able to fish the bullet out with local anaesthetic, so he didn’t need to go under. They did fill him with several other painkillers, noting other unhealed or partially healed bruises and cuts. They reset his nose and he groaned at the thought of how he looked. The doctor frowned deeply at his other injuries, especially the earlier ones that didn’t really have proper scars, but were still there. They asked when he’d broken his nose and he was about to say the previous day, but held back. The injury would heal, but not perfectly. He was losing the immortality that he’d had previously.
They must be getting close. He was running out of days. The painkillers started to take hold and things started to feel blurry.

They stitched him up and gave him more painkillers, even when he refused. This was another strange day. He didn’t feel like he was dying, but he still hated the hospital. Rey helped him out to a waiting taxi, smiling at him lightly as he was slightly woozy from the drugs.

“Come on, husband,” she wrapped her arm around his back. “Let’s go back to work.”

“See, I’m growing on you. What time is it? Did you call them all?”

She checked her watch. “Almost noon. And yes.”

“So he must have the boy. I hope that Dameron got his nephew, I never got a chance to talk to him, you talked to him right?” he shook his head, swaying as he rested his hand on the roof of the cab. She helped him into it and put on the seatbelt. “Shit, the homeless man…and the bomb. God, why did I get shot?”

“Because you were trying to be a hero,” she brushed a strand of hair behind his ear. “At least they’ve stitched your pretty face up.”

“It’s not as pretty as yours,” he gripped her leg, his hand starting to feel rubbery. “I can’t focus on these drugs. I need to protect you. I can’t do that like this. It’s like…I can’t see straight.”

“How about I protect you?”

“I’d like that.”

Back at the station, after loaning a spare shirt from another officer, they entered Tekka’s office. The scrubs were good enough for the hospital, but he looked worse with the hospital still clinging to him. He needed to move forward and get to Poe, but Rey insisted they talk to the captain first. He was starting to feel more and more unsteady, watching colours start to swirl around the room from things that weren’t there. He started to sense more phantoms around him and could almost see them clearly now. Rey’s dead face. The captain’s empty eyes and slit neck, sitting in the same chair. Finn’s desperate gaze before pulling the trigger. Poe, twitching and dying on the floor. He carried their ghosts with him.

“Captain, we have a lead about a potential bomber at the cathedral, and the next boy that was taken,” Rey started, refusing to sit down. Kylo, lightheaded, slumped in the chair across from the other man. He started tapping on his leg; when did his leg start to look like that? He shook his head; hallucinations weren’t good.

“He should go home,” Tekka said, shaking his head to Rey. “He looks like hell.”

“I’ve been through worse,” he waved his hand, trying to speak steadily and likely failing. “Rey, tell him about the boy.”

“What’s the name of the boy who was taken?” Rey asked, firming her face.

“We thought it was some boy named Elias. It’s Quirin Jinn, taken from the park,” he handed Rey a file folder and she glanced at Kylo who nodded.

“We know where he takes them,” he slowly stood, gingerly putting weight on his arm to test it on the edge of the desk. Sitting down was too tempting. “But we need people looking for his other accomplice and the potential bomber.”
“How do you know all this, Ren? Yesterday, you were nowhere. Today, you’re shooting suspects and getting shot yourself,” he sighed. “We found a note at the other boy’s house, along with another one in the park. Are they for you? Who’s Ben Solo?”

“That’s…that’s me,” he frowned.

“You are Han’s boy? I knew him,” Tekka narrowed his eyes. “I can see why you changed your name, though.”

“I have my own career, not my father’s legacy,” he said. “Now, please, let us try to save this boy. And end this day.”

Tekka stood, eyeing them both. “Go…go check in with Dameron. He’s been asking about you all morning. And the DA has been losing his mind. His assistant turned herself in for fraud. That man has been impossible to deal with, with the election closing in.”

“Someone should be watching him too, sir. There is a threat against him,” Kylo offered. “I…that the homeless man with the bomb is heading to the cathedral right now.”

The captain took a long and shaky breath. “Just…just go now. I’ll take care of things with your suspects. Again a very detailed report in the future, hmm?”

“We need extra security here too. He’s coming for me and his threats are escalating. At the courthouse too.”

He reluctantly nodded then motioned towards the door and they left the small office. He started towards the lab and she sighed and followed as he started to sway as he walked. He found Poe in the hallway, carrying a manila folder. His eyes got wide at the sight of him.

“What the hell happened to you, detective?”

Kylo realised that he hadn’t spoken to the man today. This would take some convincing.

“I was shot today, Poe. That’s what happened. And he bashed me in the face. How did things go with your nephew this morning?”

Dameron nearly dropped what was in his hands. “How did you…? What the hell, Ren? How do you know about that? Why did she call me this morning, all serious? And why did my assistant leave to take care of her father in a cop car?”

“Come on, let’s go talk somewhere private,” he motioned towards the crash room and Dameron, still surprised, followed. Rey trailed after, still watching Kylo’s movements.

“Okay, spill.” Dameron demanded as Kylo sat down on one of the beds. The bed felt so soft and he really wanted to go to sleep. “Rey, what’s your partner talking about?”

Kylo nodded at her and she tried to find the words. “He…he’s living through the same day. Or thinks he is. He says that he knows what’s going to happen today. He’s been through it for something like a couple of weeks. He knows where he’s taken the new boy; we need to find him and stop this killer.”

“What…how is that…is he insane?” He looked from Kylo back to Rey, then back to Kylo.

“He says that we’re married, so we’re both probably insane,” Rey shrugged.
“When did you get married?” Dameron demanded. “Weren’t you just at the hospital? Did you get married at the hospital?”

“We got married on another today, yesterday, the not-to-day,” Kylo offered, resting against the wall. Even the wall was soft. Everything felt like it was being covered in fog. “There’s this guy you have to find; a German assassin named Maul. He’s got these red and black face tattoos. He’s the one that I shot this morning. Oh, and the killer is my grandfather. He’s not really a nice man. I don’t really like him. When did they say that the painkillers would wear off?”

Rey rolled her eyes. “Look, Poe, I think that we need your help. I…he’s, he’s still messed up. I need someone to help me make sense of all of this.”

With his back against the wall, Kylo felt his body start to float slightly. They really did need Poe’s help. “Rey, Rey, come here. Come sit with me. I need to talk to you.”

He saw Rey roll her eyes again and move by Poe to sit by him on the bed. “Hey, how are you feeling?”

She looked like she was shining and she also felt soft. His head started to truly swim, losing all focus. It was like being drunk, but worse. He was starting not to care about the damned day and the damned things that they had to do to play this chess game, but with axes and guns. He leaned over and kissed her neck, tilting up to whisper in his ear. “I love you. Lovveeee you. You’re my wife, you know? Not today’s wife, but you know? Today is always today but also not today. Hey, you went camping once and almost froze to death in Colorado.”

Rey patted his leg and turned to look sympathetically at Poe. “Do you see what I’m dealing with?”

“I’m still here,” he hummed, resting his head on her shoulder. “Rey, Rey, let’s go to the beach. You like the beach.”

Dameron sat down on the opposite bed and Kylo turned to look at him, his eyes blurring. “You think Rey’s hot.”

The other man laughed. “He’s high as a kite. What did they give him?”

“Something with a lot of letters,” he mumbled, feeling drowsy. “Hey, where’s Finn? He’s got to… got to get the homeless man.”

“Finn?” Rey asked, forcing him up. “What does he have to do with all of this?”

He looked at Rey and saw her face slightly fuzz out. “What day is it Rey?”

“It’s September 24,” she said.

“And it’s at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…” he repeated the radio. “I hear that every goddamned morning.”

“Kylo, sweetie,” Rey shook him. “You need to take a nap.”

“You can’t leave me Rey,” he said, trying to control his mouth. “You can’t go anyyyyywheerree… you’re my wife. You have to listen.”

“Yes, I’m your wife. But that also means you need to listen to me,” her voice was soft and soothing and he felt so tired and sore. “Don’t worry. I’m not going to leave you.”
He gradually slumped down, putting his head in her lap. “Good. Stay. No…no dying today.”

He heard her whispering to Poe as he slowly fell asleep. He swam through the days and dreams brushed against his mind. Flashes of all of the days and all of the ways that she had died eventually faded away. Her distant cries when Hux attacked her also melted away and he was able to float free of the guilt and pain of that day. He was back at his home, his parents’ house, but this time with Rey. He was dreaming. They were adults, watching him as a boy talk to his father.

He turned to dream Rey and reached for her hand.

“Why are you here?”

She shook her head. “Where are we?”

“This is my house. That’s my father. He’s saying goodbye to me,” he guided her off the porch to sit in the backyard swing. The dream was silent, except for when they spoke. “Are you okay?”

She swung back and forth, her feet scrapping the ground. That sounded real, like she was really there.

He narrowed his eyes. “Which Rey are you?”

She looked up at him and smiled. “Day 14. The one at the beach.”

“I’ve thought about you a lot, and that day,” he took her hand again. “You looked beautiful in that dress.”

She reached up to tuck a hair behind his ear. “I’m jealous of Day 21. She got to marry you.”

“I’d have married you too, you know,” he smiled. The dream shifted and she was wearing the yellow dress from the day on the beach. “I…I wish I could have saved Day 20. I can’t take that back. She…she didn’t have to go through all that for me. I can’t shake that day; it’s like it’s sitting on top of every other horrible thing that has ever happened. This is all from the drugs, right? I should get high more often.”

She shook her head. “No, you probably shouldn’t. Day 22 is worried about you.”

“She…she got a bad deal. I can’t be a leader today, so she has to be, with so few of the details,” he sighed. “How am I going to get through all this?”

Rey looked up and away from him. “I think that your dad wants to talk to you.”

Across the small grass of the dreamscape of his backyard, stood his father just as he remembered him before he died.

“Come with me, come meet him,” he turned, but she was gone. Sighing, he stood.

“You look far too serious to be my son,” Han said as he approached. “But look at that hair, must be from your mother.”

“Hi dad. I…I got shot today.”

His father sighed. “At least your partner is still with you. She looked cute.”

“I tricked her into marrying me on one of the days,” he laughed to himself. “I love her so much and she keeps dying.”
His father looked at him with serious eyes. “So, it’s happening to you too?”

“What?”

The scene shifted, moving to the same murder scene from one of his previous dream. Except, this time, the man in black was there, talking to his father. But his father still stood next to him. Again, what they were saying to each other was the only thing that he could not hear. Other than Han’s breathing, the space was dead silent, except for a distant fire alarm.

“That day, that last day with you, I…I was stuck there. It felt like months until I tracked him down. He told me…he told me that I had to die willingly, without regrets he said, or else he’d be after you and your mother,” he shrugged. “I refused and the day started all over again; he’d either kill me or I’d just fall asleep. The same burnt toast and bad coffee. But it all started breaking down. I thought that I could, you know, get ahead of him and control things. But then…he…he took you. Starting killing you every day. He would strangle you in front of me and I…I had to hold your small broken body. I’m so glad that you don’t remember,” Han touched his arm and it felt so real, like he was actually there. “I tried to fight him, I did, but he…I started waking up hurt and it just…I’m sorry, son.”

“You died for me,” Kylo shook his head. “Dad, I was mad, I was mad for so long that you left us. I tried to hate you. I thought I did hate you. I…mom and I were so alone. Did you try to tell her?”

He changed the subject. “So, what’s happening now?”

“He keeps killing her. He…he’s found other kids. The kids, they’re in the day too; we all had the same disorder. It’s like…it’s like he’s looking for people…”

“Like us?”

“Yeah. He found…he found one that we’re related to. I think that’s what brought me into the loop.”

The blaring of the fire alarm started to get louder and he grabbed at his ears. The dream started to shake and he called out to his father.

“What do I do, dad!”

Han just shook his head. “Time to wake up now.”

Someone grabbed him, hard, by his injured shoulder and he blinked awake. “What…?”

Rey was shaking him, trying to get him to wake up. “Kylo, please, the house is on fire. We need to go.”

“What time is it?” He mumbled, rubbing his face.

“It’s…it’s about four. Come on, we have to go,” she helped him up and he leaned on her before he realised he was back on his feet.

“Rey, I have…I have so much to tell you. You were there. You saw my father,” he said as she helped him into the hallway, underneath the pouring sprinkler system. Dameron was waiting for them and guided them both down the hallway and out the back. Kylo winced at the brightness of the sunlight. There had to be a shooter. Where was the shooter?

“We have to keep low,” he said, trying to find any clear vantage points through his still blurred
vision. “He might be waiting for us.”

Things slowly came back into focus for him and he saw the smoke billowing from the building. There were cops and technicians everywhere, fire fighters rushing in as they were coming out, but he didn’t see any black-coated figures.

“What did…what did you guys find out?” He rubbed his eyes.

Dameron shrugged. “Not much. I checked the notes, and from what you told Rey. Bebe’s dad is fine and they arrested some crazy guy who had a dozen warrants for hit and runs. I’ve checked out the DA. Holdo is talking, trying to get a deal to keep her job, but she’s been funnelling funds and emails to both your guy and Kenobi. It’s a mess. But, here’s the good news. I also found out where our tattooed suspect is staying. You’ll love this.”

“You found where he’s staying?” Kylo was glad to have his mind back, although he still felt slightly groggy. “That’s great, Poe!”

“Oh yeah,” the other man grinned. “If everyone’s busy here, we could go check it out. Get some evidence. You know, off duty. Then you can get him on another day, another today, right?”

Kylo nodded. “Yes, we’ll get him. Come on, let’s go. But first, toss your phones here. That will throw him off. You should really fire your assistant for planting the trackers.”

Poe grimaced and took their phones and handed them off to some random lab tech and took them around to the other side of the building to wave down a cab. Rey looked at him with concern and he nodded at her that he was fine. He was still in the haze of the dream and the lingering drugs, but was feeling more focused. Finding where this one was could connect the others.

“Did they find the homeless man?” He asked, sitting in the back of the cab with Rey.

Poe looked over his shoulder after giving the location. “Oh yeah, they got him. You need to help us put the pieces together today because we have a bomb, the ramblings of a crazy man, some psycho who steals cars, and a very angry German assassin. Who the hell are these people?”

“We still need the redhead,” Kylo sighed. “But this is good.”

Rey reached for his hand and leaned forward to whisper to him. “You talk in your sleep.”

He sucked air through his teeth. “Sorry about that. We have to talk. We have to stop him. For…not just for this but for…something else too.”

She nodded, and squeezed his hand. The cab rolled through the city and he didn’t want to let go of her. She was a new Rey today, but still had all of the pieces of the other ones. How many more did he have to lose to get to the bottom of this? He slowly made a decision that he knew would hurt Quirin, but he had to show Anakin he wasn’t his pawn.

They pulled up to a rundown building, not far from Maz’s bar.

“Look at this shithole, in all its glory.” Dameron gestured with his hand. “When he was brought in this morning, he had a receipt on him from the store across the street. It’s a total flophouse in there. It was like he was trying to get caught. Come on, let’s go check it out.”

“No,” Kylo said, flatly. “He has to have it rigged. He wouldn’t be that stupid. This is planned. We don’t go in.”
“But, but the evidence?” Dameron looked slightly defeated. “Yeah, yeah, okay. So, what do we do now?”

“We go have a drink at Maz’s bar and talk about the rest of the days,” he gestured in the direction of her bar. “Rey, lead the way.”

She looked at him with wide eyes but nodded and started down the street. They were down the block when a dull explosion filled the air, quickly followed by sirens and distant yelling. Flames shot from the building. Kylo just kept walking, taking her by the arm.

“Maybe he’ll think we were in there,” he said. “Let’s go have a drink.”

“You really shouldn’t be drinking,” she murmured, patting his hand.

“I’ll keep regenerating, eventually,” he shrugged. “You could use it. Come on. Poe, you are buying.”

Dameron shook his head. “You are insane, that place just blew up! People could have been in there. But…but yeah. Let’s get a drink. Fuck this fucking day.”

They reached Maz’s and Rey didn’t look happy when Dameron got them a pitcher. She eventually took off her suit coat and leaned against his good shoulder in the booth.

“So, you’re living through this day, over and over again,” Dameron said, filling their glasses. “What do you do with those days? Aside from marrying your partner?”

“He said that was only one time,” Rey protested, lifting her glass. “Cheers, to this messed up day, to my apparently insane husband and his killer grandfather, and to the fact that I’m sitting here instead of doing my job.”

She took a long drink and Dameron followed her. Kylo lightly sipped on his but smiled at her.

“Kylo, did we have champagne at our wedding?” She asked, eyeing him.

He nodded. “We bought a bottle from the corner. I’m sorry it wasn’t fancier.” He lifted her hand to his mouth to kiss it. “We’ll have a real wedding one day, I promise.”

She raised her glass again. “To our real wedding.”

This time, he took a long drink from his mug before pointing at Poe. “I don’t have any friends, so Dameron, will you be my best man?”

“Yeah, sure,” he shrugged. “It’ll be fun. Cop weddings. All that pent up aggression. Too much booze. Rey, you have any cute friends you can make maid of honour? As in my honour?”

She laughed. “I do! My friend Rose is nice.”

“Finn likes her,” he pointed out. “Well, on the days that he meets her.”

“Finn met Rose? When?” She asked, reaching to fill her glass. “Come on, I want details.”

“We…we usually work with them. Rose has seen him at the courthouse, and usually stops Hux. Hey, call her. Ask her to come here and tell us what she knows. Call Finn too. Let’s…let’s just let today be. Let’s have the wedding reception we never had.”

Rey grinned, almost too broadly. “Hey Maz! I need your phone! It’s for my wedding!”
The barmaid snapped her head in their direction, putting a hand up to the customers trying to order.  

“Your wedding?” She tutted over. “Rey, my dear, what are you talking about?”

She downed the last of her beer. “Kylo and me, we’re married. He’s my husband. And he loves me. He told me that when he was all doped up after getting shot this morning.”

Maz looked at the table and frowned, deeply. “Your husband was shot this morning? Rey, are you all right?”

Rey emptied the pitcher into their glasses. “Apparently, I’m going to die today. Might as well make it fun.”

Poe raised his glass. “To consummating the marriage!”

“Oh, oh, Kylo, are we going to consummate?” She patted him on his shoulder and he could only smile at her.

“Rey, can we even get champagne here?” He asked, pulling her down.

“Oh, Maz can get anything,” she patted to get passed him. “Come on, I’m going to go call Finn and Rose. Oh, and Jessika.”

“Jessika?” Poe raised his eyebrows.

“Yeah, I…I think that you’ll like her,” Rey winked at him then slipped by Kylo, rubbing his back as she climbed behind him.

Dameron turned to him when Rey was at Maz’s phone. “She’s…she’s something else, Kylo. How did you…I don’t even want to know…”

“Poe, did your nephew seem okay this morning? Elias?”

He nodded. “I mean, he was a little upset to be taken from his mom, but was happy to see his dad. I still don’t know…wait…it’s one of those loop things. You know because you just know.”

“Yeah, but did he say anything about…things happening again? To him?”

He shook his head. “Nah, nothing like that.”

Kylo nodded, and raised his glass to Dameron. “To your nephew.”

“To Elias.”

They both drained their mugs and Rey returned with more shots than they needed and a bottle of champagne, carefully balanced on a tray.


“Good choice,” Poe said, grabbing the drinks. “Rey, go get another pitcher while you’re playing waitress.”

She smirked at him. “Will do.”

She turned and they both followed her ass as she went.
“First, you get partnered with her. And now you’re with her? Come on, man. Not fair,” he tapped his arm. “Spill.”

He shook his head and raised a shot. “Not today, Poe. Maybe tomorrow.”

“Isn’t…isn’t your thing that there is no tomorrow?”

“Exactly.”

They both downed their shots and Rey returned with a pitcher of beer, quickly grabbing a shot to down it after them. “Could’ve waited for me.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” Poe teased.

She settled onto Kylo’s lap and he wrapped his arms around her, nuzzling her neck.

“We get through today, I’m never going to let you live down being that high, Kylo.” She wiggled against him, refilling her glass.

He slowly looked at Poe. “And I think I still owe you like $3,000 from another day. And a shirt. Sorry.”

“Whatever, man,” he raised another shot and winked. “Pay me back tomorrow.”

“You have a deal.”

They drank and laughed. It was mostly mutual teasing stemming from Kylo’s sudden turn of face. Finn arrived, looking confused to see the cop who’d been shot that morning with his friend in his arms. Rose showed up, excited to see her friend happy. He quickly asked her about the courthouse, and anything suspicious.

“Yeah, there was this strange guy hanging around,” she shrugged. “But there are always weird people there. Hey, did you hear one of the ADAs went nuts this morning?”

He nodded, but tried to turn off the case for the rest of the day. Clues would come and go, but they needed tonight.

Jessika, a happy looking dark-haired woman showed up and they could finally open the champagne. Maz insisted on serving them in ‘nice’ glasses. Rey stayed on his lap throughout the night, laughing at her friends and just letting him hold her.

“So, you guys are married?” Rose asked, wide eyed.

“Yeah, I guess,” Rey smiled, drunkenly leaning into him. “He’s the first person who’s ever loved me.”

Despite his own drunkenness, and the persistent pain in his arm and face and the drugs still filtering through his system, he still heard the lingering pain in her voice. He turned her to face him.

“Rey, I love you. Today. Tomorrow. Forever.” He tipped her chin to kiss him. Their gathered crowd gave a small cheer. And more champagne was thrust in their hands. They laughed and tried to serve one another, only spilling their glasses everywhere. Kissing her again, he tasted the champagne on her lips and basked in the moment.

Eventually, they got food. More bad bar food, but he was drunk and hungry and unbelievably horny
after having Rey against him all night. She felt his hardness against her and teased him by moving away. He glared as she pushed in next to him in the booth, folding in between him and Rose. Finn had his arm draped around Rose and Jessika was sliding closer to Poe. Everyone was drinking, eating and he’d never heard a group of basically strangers find such quick common ground. He could leave them like this; they wouldn’t be friends without him, but they could all be okay if he left them.

He took another shot and smiled at Rey. “Hey.”

“Hi.” She looked bleary eyed and happy. “Do you really love me?”

“Of course I do,” He kissed her hand. “I married you.”

“Well, just not today.” She glanced around the table. “Do you want to get out of here?”

“And leave all this?” He gestured at the bar that was slowly becoming fond of.

“Let’s go back to my place,” she leaned in to whisper in his ear.

“If you insist,” he took her hand and helped her out of the booth.

Dameron eyed them. “Our newlyweds taking off?”

“You know it,” Rey grinned at him. “Hey, guys, take care. There’s a murderer on the loose, you know.”

They waved and went to catch a cab, emerging into the night air. He hadn’t bothered to check the time. He didn’t care. He was the one who could decide to end the loop. He’d realised that while sitting at the table, surrounding by the people whom he had come to care about. He needed them, but they didn’t really need him. He’d only brought them pain, especially Rey, who was looking up at him with a sleepy grin. She folded her arms behind his neck and kissed him, pulling him closer.

“Hey, ow.” He said. “Remember, I was shot today.”

“Let’s go home and I’ll check it out, okay?”

He slid his hand down her back. “Deal.”

He felt like a teenager, making out in the cab. Anakin hadn’t been on his mind all evening, until he had stepped out into the night; the conversation with his father seemed like a lifetime ago. He’d make sense of it tomorrow—or the next today, rather. He’d try again one last time. Then he would have to make a decision he wasn’t really sure he wanted to make. He’d give Anakin one last day to toy with him. If they succeeded, it would be for the best. If not, he would have to make sure the people he cared about were better off. With Rey on his lap, it was hard to picture not trying one last time. She was messily kissing him and her hands explored everywhere, reaching to undo his shirt and kiss up his neck. Occasionally her fingers would brush his side or where he had been shot, but that was slowly being numbed away. Even his nose was feeling better. She moaned as he bit her ear and the cab driver cleared his throat.

“Um, you’re home? Ma’am? Sir?”

“Yeah, yeah, thanks,” she said. “We just got married.”

“I can see. Look, fare’s on the house. You two…have a good night.”
He half carried her to the door, but gave up when his shoulder started to ache. Dammit. Pressing her against the wall, he slipped his hand inside her shirt.

“Hey, there’s this dress that I’d like to buy you,” he whispered, nipping at her ear. “It looks great on you.”

She laughed, almost too hard. “You…you really do know me, right?”

“I know you like to be kissed on the back of the neck,” he hummed gently in her ear, slipping his hand to brush the spot he remembered tasting before.

She shivered, running her hands up the front of his pants, tracing the shape of his erection. “Stop teasing me. Take me upstairs and make love to me, please.”

“Yes…” he kissed the side of her face and a blur caught his attention. In the reflection of her front door, he could see a dark-clothed figure standing across the street. He glanced over his shoulder. Anakin stood across the street, his hand clenched.

He shook his head, and tried not to react. Tomorrow, Anakin mouthed in the streetlight. He kissed her again, and nudged her towards the door, putting the man behind him. She didn’t notice anything and was happily reaching to finish unbuttoning his shirt. It was better that she didn’t know, he thought.

In the elevator, she undid his belt, slipping her hand into the front of his pants, grinning at his reaction.

“Oh, hello,” she said, glancing down. “Wow.”

“It’s all for you.”

They stumbled, kissing frantically in the hallway before entering her apartment. He still locked the door but she didn’t notice, unbuttoning her top and heading towards her bedroom. His head felt heavy, but his body was pulling him in a very specific direction. Damn that man and damn however they were going to die tonight.

“Are you coming?” She called.

“Yeah,” he tried unbuttoning the last of his shirt but his hands felt too slow. “I need help with my shirt.”

She returned, in her bra and panties. “Come on, you invalid.”

“Hey, that hurt.” He breathed her in as she stepped closer to undo his shirt. She smelt like beer and softly of sweat, but still her own delicate tones. He managed to get his pants off at the same time. Things were really starting to blur and he let her guide him into her bedroom. She pulled him down onto the bed and climbed on top of him. He sat up, knowing he found a good position when she hissed.

She was beautiful, drunk, and willing. He fumbled again at her bra, unable to use both arms.

“Oh, Kylo,” she smiled at him, reaching behind to undo it. “You want me.”

“Yes.”

“You love me.”
“Yes.”

“Then show me.”

Grabbing her with his good arm, he pulled her closer, enjoying the feeling of her breasts against his bare chest. She shifted off of him and quickly removed her underwear, smiling again when he did the same. He moved to his knees and her legs wrapped around him. When she sank down onto his cock, they both gasped at the contact.

“That’s so much better,” she kissed him. “You fill me up.”

“You’re mine.”

He felt all of her, but at the same time, his head started to ache. Blaming it on the lingering painkillers, he kissed down her neck, trying to shake the feeling. With each thrust of her hips, he felt her sigh lightly; it gradually transformed into low moans. She was focused and seemed determined to get him and herself off. He wasn’t going to last long and blamed it on her and the alcohol and the fact that he had been shot that morning. Was it really this morning?

“Oh, yes,” she moaned. “This is…yes…”

He felt the shape of her ribs and the curve of her back. He was inside her and could feel every part of her body, every thrust of her pelvis. He couldn’t leave her to be alone again, but he had hurt her and used her. This wasn’t the final day, he knew, but he needed to find a hard solution to what he was doing to her.

Several more quick motions of her hips and she gasped, gripping him against her. The sound of their flesh meeting nearly took him down another dark path. No, this was not that day. He tightened his hands on her hips and she seemed to lose herself in him, throwing her head back. This was for her. He wanted to last longer, but he was gone at her sudden orgasm. Her vagina softly tensed against him and she shuddered against him with a low cry of joy and he came. His head felt even lighter, but he still clung to her. She shifted slightly, leaning down to kiss him.

That’s when he noticed her blinking rapidly. “I must be really drunk…I feel, dizzy.”

“Yeah, me too. Let’s go…get cleaned up and go to bed.”

She nodded and kissed him again, shifting off of him. Taking deep breaths, she stumbled when she stepped off the bed. “Really, really drunk.”

He felt more unsteady when he tried to stand. He grabbed her and made her sit on the bed. He was dizzy and lightheaded, but not from drinking. He glanced over his shoulder at the air vent by the bed. It had a shirt stuffed into it.

“No, hey, let’s just…let’s just go to sleep.”

She nodded, not able to keep her head up. “Love you.”

“I love you too.”

He wrapped his arms around her, holding her on top of the covers. She kissed his hand and then her head fell limply to the pillow. He noticed her slip away and was silently thankful for a quiet death. Carbon Monoxide poisoning: he’d noticed it too late. He must have killed everyone in the apartment building, waiting for them.
His eyes finally blurred when the clock ticked over to 11.55.

Chapter End Notes

Eeee! I'm loving all the comments and the guesses at the clues. Here's an answer to one part that everyone has pretty much gotten right.
Day 23

Chapter Summary

Kylo and Rey put the pieces together and the perfect day appears to be set. Will they get a tomorrow? Read the tags for warnings.

Chapter Notes

I'm loving all of your comments! I will try to reply as many as I can but work is catching up with me. I have an EU workshop the next two days that I need to record the minutes for (annoyed grunt). Then I start teaching so I'll have lectures to replan and students to chase down. So the final main chapter (the very last chapter is an epilogue, which could be good or bad since I have two written) might take a while, since I want it to be, well, perfect. This is going to end up being twice as long as my PhD dissertation (and I'm infinitely more proud of this than that any day.)

AnnaExMachina commented about music and YES I have a playlist, but I really welcome more suggestions!! I'll post the Spotify link on the next update (whenever that might be.)

Day 23

He still felt dizzy and slightly sick as he woke up, and there was a dull ache in his shoulder. It was 5.59 and his alarm had woken him to the usual shiver and jolt. Kylo also felt distinctly hungover. But it was worth it, he thought. Anakin had sought him out; without all of his accomplices, he was being isolated, despite getting a jump on the day. He couldn’t manipulate new people within this loop. He could only press on the world that he had learnt and memorised.

“Well, shit,” he mumbled, resting his head on the pillow. “Okay, radio, do your thing.”

Once again, the news clicked on; just what he needed to hear.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

He stretched out on his bed. All of the pieces were slowly coming together, but it was still ungodly frustrating. He gently prodded his drunken memories, closing his eyes to wince at the thing that he was considering. He shook his head and decided to try again, using all of the moving parts that he had at this point. There were still some other things that bothered him. Holdo and Bebe were part of it now, planted from the start to throw him off until it was time to act. And he had to find where the three accomplices were. He needed that if he didn’t get through today and set things in motion for a final day, if it came to that.
On cue, the note was slipped under his door, followed by the knock.

“Well, at least Finn’s okay,” he said, moving to stand. “All right, get him downstairs.”

He picked up the note as he brushed his teeth. He really did feel hungover, but at least he didn’t feel like there was a gaping hole in his shoulder anymore. It was only the memory of being shot. He stepped over the echo of Rey, dead on his floor, and tried to refocus on the day. He was late, but it was so much better than being early.

“Dameron, Dameron, Dameron,” he hummed to himself, scrolling through his phone. It was ringing as he put on the water for tea.

“Yeah, it’s Dameron. And it’s too early. What’d you want?”

“Hi Poe, it’s Kylo.” He played with the string of the teabag. “Are you busy?”

“Kylo? As in Detective Kylo Ren? Since when are we on a first-name basis? And I’m always busy.”

“It…it’s a long story. Look, the killer — the one murdering the kids — just sent the guy that works downstairs from me to drop a note under my door. It’s a meaningless taunt,” he said, calmly. “But I need your help. It’s about your nephew. And your assistant.”

“What? Hey, hold on. How do you know about him? And what about her?”

He poured the water into the teapot as he rolled his shoulder, enjoying the feeling of being able to move more or less freely move his arm again. There was lingering pain, but it wasn’t that bad.

“I know that he’s in trouble and you’re trying to protect him,” he thought about the distant day in which Elias died and cringed. “We’re on a bit of a schedule today, so I need you to tell your assistant to take a couple of officers with her and stop the man that’s going to try to take her father. He’s got warrants out for him, and I’m fairly sure that the truck he’s driving is stolen. Then, go get Elias. Take him somewhere safe, just not to his father’s. Maybe get him to meet up with you somewhere else. Don’t go anywhere familiar. And take a different phone. Your assistant has put trackers on all of our phones and doesn’t remember it.”

“How…what are you even talking about?”

“Are you…can you do those two things?”

He heard him turn in his chair and say something, then came back on the line. “You better be right about this.”

He hung up, rolling his eyes. “Of course I’m right.”

“Rey, Rey, Rey,” he went through his phone to find her number.

“Yeah, Niima?”

“Hey.”

“Hi? Kylo? What’s wrong?”

“Does something have to be wrong for me to call you?” He smiled at her voice. He’d never seen her drink so much before and it was a happy memory to overshadow the end of the day.
“Well, yes. You sound…are you drunk?”

“Hungover,” he grabbed a Tylenol. “But there’s something else. I have a lead. Can you come by? I’ll text you the address.”

Again, he hung up before she could reply. He sent the address and then moved to change, ignoring the crow hitting his window.

“Stupid bird.”

He was just placing the chair by the door when she came jogging up.

“Hey, what’s up?”

She noticed the chair and set her bag down. At least he could stop that.

“Kylo?”

“So, I’m about to tell you something insane,” he said, moving to close the door and lock it. He sighed at the white surface, afraid of turning around and seeing the phantoms of her dead on the floor. “Our killer just left me a note. Well, not really our killer. Finn does it.”

“Finn? What are you talking about?” She moved to study the letter on the table. She spotted the tea beside it and eyed him. “You had time to make tea? Why haven’t you called in the others? Why just me?”

He nodded. “Sit down. The sugar is there. I need you to listen and trust me that this is all really happening. And I need your help to sort it all out.”

She looked at the cups set on the table and then back at him. “What are you talking about?”

“Do you trust me?”

She frowned. “Well, to be honest, the past few weeks have been really rough on everyone but you’ve gone around like it’s somehow more my fault.”

He sighed, rubbing his face. The memory of a broken nose spread and he had to shake it off as he sat down. “None of this is your fault. I can’t tell you how much you mean to me, but I need to explain something first. Just hear me out.”

Meeting his eyes and studying his slightly pained motions, she nodded.

“I know who the killer is, and I think I know how to stop him. I have an idea. He’s my grandfather, Anakin Skywalker. He’s using these days to stir up discontent between Kenobi and Palpatine to get back at them for killing my grandmother. Or at least he thinks that they caused her death. I need to talk to them today,” he poured them both tea and she slowly took hers, stirring in her sugar. She gave him a quick nod, noticing that he was waiting to speak.

“I’m living the same day, over and over again. I had this disorder as an infant that I share with the other murdered children, especially the last boy. He uses the kids to start and end the loop. September 24th is my loop. But it started before I realised it. He’s…he’s got the kids in the loop and he accidentally got it started for me, because the last boy is my cousin,” he leaned back across from her and she looked at him with wide eyes. “When he killed him, the day kept going. And going. Finally, he figured out who I was and how he could get to me. And now he’s bored and wants this all to be over with. He’s trying to break me, making it a game. I need to get it right and
kill him.”

She sighed and slowly sipped her tea. “I…that’s a lot of information.”

He set his hands on his cup, shaking his head. “Try keeping it all in your head when everyone else wakes up forgetting that it has all happened before.”

She leaned forward, putting her elbows on the table. “How…if it’s the same day, how many times have we had this conversation?”

He shrugged. “It’s been nearly a month. But I don’t know how long we were in the loop before that.”

She shook her head. “I…I still don’t understand.”

“Look, Rey,” he met her eyes. He wanted to tell her everything right then and there. But he had to start in the place that reached her the quickest. “I know that I’m not easy to work with. I make quick judgements when I think I have all of the pieces, but you wait. You figure things out in a way that I’m only just learning to do. If this day, these days, have taught me anything it’s that I need you as a partner, friend, and…”

He trailed off, looking back at his cup and the spots on their fingers where the rings should be. The memory of her in her bed, lying dead in his arms, flittered across his mind.

She raised an eyebrow. “And?”

“And everything else. Do you believe that you can fall in love with someone in one day?” He asked, looking up to meet her eyes.

She looked like she was thinking about it. “Yes, if it’s the right day, with the right person.”

“This isn’t really the right day, but you’re the right person for me.”

Her eyes blinked shut. She looked more than confused than annoyed. “None of that made sense. What do you mean you’re living the same day? How is that possible?”

He reached out to take her hand. “I don’t know. But it’s happening. I know that you once were attracted to me, and then I opened my mouth.

She looked at their hands, then back to his eyes. “Can you…can you give me a minute to think about this.”

He nodded, checking his watch. “Okay, I need to call my mother. I hope that we can stop her from taking Luke to the airport.”

Moving to the living room, he walked out onto the balcony as he called her. He gently moved the crow aside, feeling sorry for the small creature. He also died everyday.

“Hello?”
“Hi it’s Ben,” he said. “Are you taking Luke to the airport?”

“Yeah…yes. How did you know?”

He gripped the balcony railing, listening to his neighbour’s dog bark. “Turn around. Go back home. I need both of your help today.”

“What are you talking about? Our help with what?”

Taking a deep breath, he tried to sort out the days again. “Mom, the man who you think is your father, at that sad little nursing home, he isn’t your father. He’s his half-brother. He’s the one that injured him. His name is Owen Lars.”

He heard her repeat what he was saying to Luke.

“Mom, just put me on speakerphone.”

“How do I do that?”

He dropped his head back and glared at the sky. “Give the phone to Luke and get him to do it.”

The phone rustled and then he heard the dull echo of being on speakerphone. The sound of the car moving was dully crackling in the background.

“Can you hear me?”

“Yes,” they both answered. He hadn’t heard his uncle’s voice in so long. He really had isolated himself in his work.

“Look, Anakin is killing these children, the ones in the case that we’re working on. There’s a letter and a diary from your mother in a chest somewhere that you two need to find. I need something to prove to them that they knew your mother and father,” he said as clearly as he could.

“Wait, Ben, how do you know all of this?” Luke asked. “And who?”

“I…it’s a long story. He’s trying to get back at Sheev Palpatine and Ben Kenobi for something that happened a long time ago. I’m stuck living the same day, over and over again. It’s something that sounds totally insane, but it’s really happening to me and I really need your help. There are clues there that we can use against him. Just…please,” he heard his balcony door open and Rey stepped out. She had changed in the meantime, her hair loose again. He liked those days.

He felt warmth spread through his chest as she reached to take his free hand on the balcony rail.

“Okay, Ben, if you’re sure,” his mother said. He heard the clicking of the indicator and turned to smile at Rey.

Meeting her eyes, he couldn’t help but tell them.

“There…there’s something else about this day. I’ve met someone. I really love her and I can’t wait for you to meet her,” he grinned at her and she gave him a soft look. “I’ll call you back. Be careful.”

He hung up before they could reply. He turned too, but his hands on her hips. She didn’t resist.

“So?”

“The way that you’re talking and acting…it’s like this is real. Like I’m a real person,” she moved
closer to him. “Did you mean what you just said?”

He cupped her face, taking in the way that she looked in the morning light. “Every day, I have to explain this to you. And every day, you believe me about the loop. The fact that I love you sometimes takes a little more convincing.

“No one…no one has ever looked at me like this before,” she shook her head. “No one has ever really loved me before either.”

“I do,” he bent down to kiss her, giving her the chance to pull away. She didn’t. His lips met hers and he sighed at holding her alive again. “Now, let’s go find out what he’s planning and end this day.”

He grabbed the note and his reserve weapon on the way down. He hadn’t bothered to change; it felt almost normal to have these clothes all of the time. He went through the checklist in his head: Dameron and Bebe were taken care of, he’d called Rey and his mother. Next would be Finn and that damned homeless man. Then, Rose and Holdo. And they knew where the damned assassin was. It could all come together. He’d have to call the Jinns and warn them. Quirin would be disappointed they wouldn’t be taking a trip today, but they would make it up to him. Then, Kenobi and Palpatine.

Taking the elevator, Rey again looked at the note. “What are you thinking?”

“I need Finn to leave work and go stop the homeless man. He just sends him where he’ll think we’ll be, or should be if were following his clues. That’s part of his control. There’s this intersection, and then the Cathedral to go after the DA to threaten him. He’s got a bomb,” he held up the gun. “I don’t like giving it to him, but he has to be safe.”

Rey nodded, but with a bit of a frown. “We should send backup.”

“He usually spots it,” he thought for a moment. “But if we time it right, we can stop Hux when he drops the girl. It’s only 7.30. Call it in to this café and also warn them about extra eyes at the station. I don’t want any bombs or fires or trucks destroying the place,” he scribbled down another address and showed her. “They’ll arrive at the same time and get him.”

She nodded, pulling out her phone to quickly make the call. They would have to time this perfectly, but sending actually armed people after him might cut him off.

The elevator dinged and Rey followed him towards the newspaper stand. He spotted Finn and raised the note.

“Did you drop this?” He asked, raising his eyebrows.

Finn tried to shake his head, but he could see the lingering guilt in his expression when he spotted Rey, ending her call. She frowned at him and shook her head.

“I…yeah. Look, he gave me $50 to drop it under your door and run,” he stepped around to talk to them on the street. “I…I’m sorry, I guess. What’s it about?”

“The man murdering the children,” Kylo said, firmly. “So, now you’re going to help us.”


Kylo wrote down the address and his phone number and handed him the gun and the envelope. “Take these. Follow the homeless man when he gets to this intersection. He’s waiting for us, but he
might recognize you. Get him arrested for having the bomb. He might try to drop it, but if he does, he’ll head to the Cathedral and get another one somewhere.”

Finn quickly tucked the gun away and studied the piece of paper. “Is that…is that all?”

Kylo shook his head, tuning into the darkest day. “He might try to shoot up the rec centre. I know that the kids won’t like it, but they can’t be there. Believe me. Please.”

Nodding, Finn took in the information with mild shock. “If…how do you know all this?”

He tilted his head. “Look, I just do. You have to trust us. Sorry you have to take off from work, but I’ll make it up to you tomorrow, okay?”

Slowly, Finn looked from Kylo to Rey. “Do you believe what he’s saying?”

She quickly nodded. “Yes. Everything.”

“I’ll just…” he glanced towards the stand. “My boss isn’t here. I’ll shut it down and go…go chase a homeless bomber, I guess. Better than working.”

Kylo nodded. “Good. Call us when you’re done, okay?”

“Sure.”

Kylo checked his watch. He knew what he wanted to do. “Let’s go to the café as back up. We’re armed this time. I really need to talk to this man.”

She looked at him with nervousness at his tone but lightly nodded. He wanted to take her hand, but was more focused on getting the man that hurt her in any way that he could.

He walked with a steady pace, remembering the timing, keeping an eye out for the car. There. He was boxed in by cop cars, no sirens, just lights. Good job, Rey. The red-headed man had his hands up, the girl dropped at his feet. He had him now. His weapon raised, they strode closer, joining the other officers.

“Hey Hux!” He called. “Are you looking for us?”

He turned and glared at them. “You’re not supposed to be here.”

Kylo strode by the other officer, letting his legs carry him forward. The other man looked unarmed, probably just with a knife. Rey stopped walking, gun raised beside the other officer as he just kept going forward, unable to stop moving. He met the eyes of the other man and felt rage take over. He couldn’t hear anything or see anything around him. The only thing he focused on was the memory of that man hurting her. There may have been shouting around him as he walked up to Hux without fear. Shocked, the man drew a knife and slashed at him, but he moved it aside. With the butt of his gun, he smashed him across the cheek. He dropped and he pushed the knife away. Kneeling on his chest, he punched him hard in the face. He felt himself leave his body and he lost track of how many times he’d hit him until three officers and Rey pulled him off of him.

“Kylo, that was insane! What are you doing?” Rey pulled him aside as the others checked for a pulse.

“He’s alive, but needs an ambulance,” one of them called to him.

He shook his hand, looking at his bloodied knuckles. He couldn’t speak; he couldn’t see anything
but her. He wanted to kill him for what he did, but they’d stopped him. They shouldn’t have stopped him.

“Kylo, Kylo,” Rey was pushing him against a wall. “Talk to me, look at me. What was that?”

“We…we got that one,” he finally said, exhaling sharply. “He’s hurt you. He really hurt you. I needed…I needed to do that.”

She met his eyes, concern etching her features. “Tell me. Tell me what happened. You…you could be in real trouble for this.”

“I…I don’t care,” he mumbled, pulling her into his arms. “I got him for you. I’m so sorry I couldn’t do that before.”

Rey let him sag against her as he let out a constrained sob. The other officers and EMTs were milling around them. He felt her rubbing his back and slowly started to feel his anger fade. Despite his battered hand, he felt less guilt at what had happened to her. At least he didn’t shoot him, like he had wanted to.

“We need to go,” he whispered to her. “Let’s go to the courthouse and talk to Rose and Holdo.”

“Go? We can’t go,” she shook her head. “You just…assaulted a man on the street.”

“He’s just unconscious,” he answered with a shrug. “He’ll live. But if he hurts you again, I’ll kill him.”

“Kylo…don’t think like that,” she watched as the forensics unit arrived to check on the dead girl. She turned away, suddenly reminded of what was at stake. “Let’s…let’s just go. Before anyone takes you away.”

The slipped away, out of the scene without much notice. They’d have to explain everything later, but right now, they had a suspect that was alive, somehow. Getting to Holdo was his next goal, as they waited to hear from Finn and Dameron. He shook his hand as they got in the taxi, wincing.

She sighed and took out a tissue from her pocket to pat on his hand. “Why did you do that?”

“Rey, it was just…really bad,” he tried to shake himself out of the memory. “So many horrible things have happened.”

“Tell me,” she said gently, rubbing his sore hand in gentle circles.

“He…when I was a kid, my father was killed in what we thought was a robbery. But it was him. My grandfather killed him,” he slumped against the window. “Or, at least, that’s what my father told me in a dream. But enough strange things have happened — hell, I’m in a fucking time loop — that for all I know, the dream was telling me what really happened. When my mother calls again, I’ll have to ask her.”

“What…what else?” She asked, prodding his memory to try to get him to calm down. “I’m here, Kylo. We’re going to get him, but you can’t beat the hell out of every person that hurt me on other days. Okay?”

He turned to look at her. “You’ve been killed, every day. You die before midnight, every day and I can’t seem to stop it. He’s…he’s killed everyone around us before. He’s blown up a school, the courthouse, shot up a rec centre…he’s burnt down the station. He’s made me watch you die in brutal ways. But the worst days are the ones when you die alone.”
She bit the inside of her cheek and saw him blinking back tears as he spoke. “You shouldn’t have to deal with those memories alone.”

He reached up to stroke her cheek. “I’ve told you before. It hurts. It hurts to know that all of these other yous had to die. Sometimes, I see them in the places that you’ve died. You were there, in my dream. Not you, but another one, from a beautiful day on the beach. I think about that, and other good times I’ve had with you, when the dark memories get to be too much.”

“I might not totally understand this, but if you really do care about me, then I will always listen to you, okay?” She leaned into his hand. “I’ll help you through this.”

“You always do,” he sighed, letting the last of his adrenaline fade away. She leaned forward to kiss him lightly as they arrived at the courthouse.

He followed her inside, keeping his eyes open for Anakin. He would be preparing to take Quirin soon, but that was two hours away. He wanted to go talk to him, but the threat of Maul loomed over them. The next stop would have to be the flophouse. That man attacked without real motivation, so he would have an excuse to shoot him.

He must have looked lost in thought because Rey grabbed at his suit coat. “Come on.”

They met Rose in the tiny office and she looked at Rey with a smile. “What are you doing here?”

“Rose, we’re worried about the man killing the children. I think that you should add some extra security. We have to talk to ADA Holdo and the DA,” she said. “Are they here?”

She nodded. “Yeah, I just saw them get back from the police station. Are you sure about the threat? I can tell my boss, but he might not be impressed.”

Kylo had stood silent in the doorway, trying to get back to himself. He looked at Rose and she flinched slightly at his look. Rey shot him a glare.

“I…I’m sorry,” he managed a small apology. “I’m her partner, Kylo Ren. It’s been a bit of an intense morning. But the threat is real. And he might come here, but he doesn’t always.”

“Oh,” she nodded. “Okay. Should I call them and tell them that you’re coming?”

He shook his head, trying to neutralise his features. “No, we need to catch them off guard. I’m… I’m still waiting for my mother to call me with information, but we have them here now. Might as well take care of this.”

Rose looked confused and Rey just shrugged at her. They left as she called her boss. Another piece to the puzzle wrapped up.

Striding up the stairs, they saw Holdo just returning to her office. Again, his shoulders stiffened at the sight of her. Rey rubbed his lower back and he caught her look with a light nod. He needed to look determined and not murderous.

They knocked on her open door and he eyed the woman.

“Detectives? We’ve been looking for you,” she said, sitting down. “Apparently, they have a suspect. Someone beat the heck out of him, so they won’t be able to question him for a while.”

“Yes, and another suspect should be heading in soon,” he nodded. “Along with you.”
She paled. “What are you talking about?”

He lightly shook his head. “You’re playing both sides, and he’s manipulating you to get what he wants. I have to go talk to the DA right now, but I really suggest that you don’t take any calls from the man calling himself Skywalker. And you don’t warn him that we know. I know you were planning to go to the Kenobi benefit tonight. I think it would be better if you could be anywhere but there.”

She looked at them with wide eyes. “I…I don’t…I just thought…”

“No excuses,” he said. “Talk to your boss once we’re done with him. And if you are gone when we come back, the only place I want to see you is back at the police station, explaining what you know about him to us.”

He turned from the room, feeling strangely satisfied at not getting too enraged at her. He smirked at Rey and she returned the look.

“Feeling better?” She whispered.

“Much.”

They knocked on Palpatine’s door and this time waited until he called for them to come in.

“Detectives?” He turned from where he standing by the row of clothing. Again in the same spot. “Where have you two been all morning? The others are doing actual police work.”

Kylo sat down and motioned for him to sit across from him at the desk, taking control of the room. Rey sat beside him, focused on the confused man crossing the room, his own office.

“I know you know the man killing the children, Skywalker,” Kylo began. “He’s been threatening you and manipulating you for something that happened when you were younger. He’s trying to ruin your career to get revenge.”

Palpatine rubbed his chin. “That’s…that’s quite a story.”

“Do you remember an accident? With a woman named Padmé?” He asked, sitting up.

He narrowed his eyes at the question but still seemed to be thinking about that. “No, I don’t recognise that name.”

“Please, sir, think about it,” Rey started.

“She was pregnant and you were helping her and she fell somehow,” Kylo continued. “You knew Anakin Skywalker. You lived near him. Did you ever know a doctor and his wife? As neighbours?”

Palpatine looked blank. “I…maybe. I don’t…”

He looked frustrated that he couldn’t remember. He was a man who made his career on his mind. Missing memories must be aggravating; they were to Kylo.

Kylo slowly stood. “We have to go, sir, but please avoid contact with that man. He’s out to destroy your career. We’ll be back when we have some proof that you knew him. That might help you. In the meantime, you need to have a long conversation with ADA Holdo about the work she’s been doing for him and the Kenobi campaign.”
They left the stunned man. He glared at Holdo as they walked by her office. She was still there and nervously stood when she noticed them. Good.

His phone rang as they were heading down the stairs. Dameron.

“Hey.”

“Hi, it’s Dameron. Elias is safe, along with Bebe’s dad. That psycho in the truck is a real piece of work. He’s here now, denying everything. How in the hell did you know about all this?”

“We’re on our way to the station soon and I’ll tell you everything. Good work,” he nodded to Rey. “We just have one more stop.”

“Where?” She asked. She seemed to be more comfortable around him when he was in charge and not ready to throw punches.

“We’re still waiting for mom and Luke to find what I’m looking for,” he shook his head. “If this doesn’t work, I’m just going to get them to bring the chest down here from Albany because I know what I need. They’re probably talking over everything and wasting time.”

“You don’t seem to like your family?” She asked when they reached the exit. He took a sweep of the crowd and didn’t notice any familiar faces.

He shrugged. “I’ve had…issues with them. But now, with you, I don’t want to spend so much time away from them. Aside from you, they’re all I really have. I shouldn’t have taken that for granted,” he paused, turning to her. “You’re told me about your parents, and your aunt, and what happened to you. You had a hard life growing up and I don’t want to see anything else bad happen to you.”

She reached for his hand. “I told you about…that?”

“The attack? Yes,” he met her eyes, trying to block out the other memory that threatened to make his knees weak. “And how your parents left you when you were a child.”

She looked slightly embarrassed and he tipped her chin towards him.

“If I can tell you everything, so can you,” then he kissed her, trying to take away any painful memory that she might be reliving.

She stepped away and gave him a genuine look. “How are you doing this? Making it all…seem to feel better?”

“I know you,” he tilted his head. “I’m sorry that you don’t know me yet.”

“Soon,” she smirked. “I’ll know you soon enough.”

He gave the address to the flophouse and quickly called the Jinns. Whatever delayed Quirin in being taken would make him feel even more at ease. Ideally, the boy wouldn’t have to be taken at all. He carefully explained to Kristina — his aunt, who knew? — that there was a threat specifically against her son. They should get out of town with him, just anywhere but Albany.

“Detective, are you sure?” She asked.

“Yes, Kristina,” he replied. “Take a taxi. He might know your car. Tell Quirin that we said hello.”

“How do you know him?”
“We…we’ve met before. He’s a great kid.”

“Thanks. We’ll do it. Can I call you at this number? If anything happens?”

His pulse briefly quickened at the thought. The trackers were still on their phones. But that might draw him to them and away from Quirin. “Yes, Kristina. Please do.”

He hung up and still waited for his mother’s call, drumming his fingers on the taxi seat. His hand was still stinging, but it felt better knowing why it hurt.

“This man, the man we might encounter, is fearless,” he warned. “We have to be ready.”

“I’ll be ready as long as you are.”

He took her hand again, feeling in control of their destiny for the first time in a long while.

The run-down building looked dangerous and he briefly thought about calling in support. But they didn’t have time to wait. He might run if he saw that they were closing in, if Anakin had time to warn him.

Kicking down the door, they walked by passed-out junkies and squinting homeless people. There was only one passable staircase up. One way in or out, from what he could see. The lights were dim, but he was able to see up to the next floor. This one was empty. He had to be here, if the junkies didn’t dare go up there. He tried to steady his stance as Rey flanked him, taking his other side as they moved. She was able to follow him quickly; they hadn’t been in this situation that often as partners. Why had he avoided her for so long? Idiot.

The door down the hallway burst open and Maul was stalking out, looking mildly surprised to find them waiting for him. He fired twice before Maul could get his weapon out; each shoulder was hit. Being stuck in the loop hard really improved his aim, at least. He still tried to lift his gun as he slumped against the wall, yelling at them in German.

“Don’t make me shoot you again!” He yelled.

Glaring, the man fell to his knees and he kicked the weapon from his hand, pushing him to the ground. Rey handed him her cuffs and it was over. They had him. They had the hardest one. Restraining him against the ground, he looked up at Rey and grinned.

“Let’s take him in and get some answers,” he pulled the man to his feet and shoved him forward, not really listening to what he was saying. He focused on Rey calling in for backup.

Finn texted as they were putting him into a waiting squad car. The other officers saw the tattoos and looked at Rey with confusion.

“Rey!” He called. “Finn got him too!”

She practically jumped into his arms. “We did it!”

He held her, tightly. This was it. Anakin was alone now and Quirin was out of town. Now they would just have to find him and end this before he could hurt anyone that they cared about.

For the first time, he felt content entering the station. Tekka met them at the door with surprise and pure confusion. The officers had taken Maul to the hospital with specific orders for protective custody and an extra detail for the staff. Kylo hadn’t bothered clearing it with anyone and just told them what to do.
“What…I need an explanation now why we have two random suspects demanding to see Ben Solo, brought in for two different things and two more basically unconscious suspects at the hospital,” he pointed at his office and part of Kylo’s confidence wavered, but he met Rey’s eyes and felt some reassurance. “And why the DA is calling me to arrest his assistant for fraud.”

“Captain, I can explain everything,” he sat down. “I got a lead this morning; there was a direct threat made against me. I’m Ben Solo, and I’m after the man who is killing these children and who killed my father.”

The captain slammed his door shut and glared at him. “And how do you explain the rest of this? How is all connected? Why do we need to have extra security everywhere that you apparently go?”

He nodded. “These men, and Holdo, they’ve been working with him. They’re trying to get to the DA as part of his wider plan. He’s…he’s killing the children to…”

He couldn’t bring up the time loop to the captain without looking unhinged and gave Rey a slightly panicked look.

“He’s doing it to damage his re-election campaign,” she provided, always balancing him out when he faltered. “This is a very dangerous and powerful man and we need to be worried. You need some people on him. And the other candidate…”

“Kenobi,” Kylo finished.

Tekka shook his head. “You two have been fighting for weeks and suddenly…you’re finishing each other’s sentences? What is happening today?”

“We’re getting our killer, that’s what’s happening,” he moved to stand. “We need to go talk to Dameron. He has some results for us. It will all be in the report, captain.”

“It better be a 500 page report,” Tekka waved them off. “And I’m going to have to ignore the part about you beating one of them nearly to death.”

“To be fair, sir, he had a knife,” Rey slipped in. “And he looked like a bit of a dick.”

“Just go.”

They exchanged a small laugh in the hallway up to the lab. Now, all he needed was his mother to call. Reaching the hallway to lab, he gave Poe an unexpected smile and the other man just looked at him with bewilderment, holding a file folder filled with papers.

“A little early in the day to be drinking?”

“No, no, Poe, we got them all,” Rey said, quickly. “We got all of his accomplices. Now we just have to wait for him to try something and we will get him.”

He motioned for them to enter the lab and shook his head. Bebe stood at the far end, looking at them and biting her lip. Kylo tossed his phone at her.

“Fix it,” he said. “Take out the SIM card and fix it. Hers and his too.”

With shaking hands, she poked out the SIM card. “Poe, I…this is something I can do, but I don’t remember doing it. I swear. Why was he after my father?”

Kylo looked from the boss to the assistant. “Have you had weird dreams or strange phone calls?
Something you can just about remember, but can’t quite?”

She finished his phone and Rey handed over hers. She worked quickly, going through her memory at the same time.

“I…just…sometimes, it’s like I’m being watched, or something,” she handed Rey her phone.

With a firm hand, Poe gave her his. “We’ve worked together for years and I consider you a good friend. But you need to tell me what is going on.”

Her lip quivered, finished with his phone. “I…I’ve had dreams, I guess. A man telling me to do things. But I didn’t think I actually did them. But I guess I did.”

“We…” he sighed. “Look, I’d send you home if he wasn’t still out there. Go…just go do something monotonous that you hate. Sort the file room.”

She handed him the phone and snuck by him. He exhaled loudly.

“So what exactly are we up against?”

Kylo looked over to the picture of Elias and shook his head. “A man who has no feelings, except hate.”

Dameron still eyed him. “How did you know all of this?”

He looked to him. “I’m living the same day, over and over again. It’s a time loop. And we’re so close to getting it right.”

Frowning, the other man scrubbed his face. “You know…none of that will hold up in court, right?”

He’d been nearly overjoyed at getting these parts right that he forgot that the loop would have to end eventually and he’d have to do real work again.

“Um…”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought. And that’s what you’d say in court too ‘Sorry, Mr Defence Attorney, I was busy reliving the same day over and over again that I forgot that I had to gather evidence and do real police work’,” he rubbed the back of his neck in irritation. “Since you know where all of these people are and who they are or whatever, we can look through cameras and find when he makes contact with them, right? We got little from the drops because he knew when the cameras were going to switch away. I’m guessing that you’ve only been going after where you know they’ll be, not where they started,” Dameron finished, starting to fiddle with the same take-out menu in his nervous hands.

Kylo nodded, still feeling mildly ashamed that he had overlooked this part. Rey looked at him with sympathy, but also amusement at his reaction.

With a firm look, Dameron stood. “I mean, the homeless guy had a bomb; we can keep him on that. The assassin that you just brought in, he’s going to get shipped back to Europe and they can sort him out at The Hague. The crazy guy who tried to snatch Bebe’s father, that’s another slam-dunk. And we can probably dig some dirt up on the guy who got his face bashed in, but to connect them to the wider case, we need real evidence. Are you two done running around the city? Can you do real work now?”

He stood there, still looking blankly at him. “I think that you’re the smartest man I know.”
Poe laughed. “That means that you are buying lunch and then we’re going to go over a zillion traffic and security cameras to find these connections that must exist.”

“Well…” Kylo bit his lip. “He’s sort of tracking our credit cards.”

“How much cash do you have?”

“Like $200.”

“It isn’t even pay day. Since when does a cop carry that much cash?” Dameron raised an eyebrow. “Weren’t you taking cabs all day? And since when would lunch cost more than that?”

He shrugged. “My mother…sends me money sometimes.”

“You are a very complex and strange man, Kylo Ren,” Dameron clasped his shoulder. “I’ll order, you pay.”

He was still annoyed with himself over the quick lunch of, again, Chinese in the break room. Poe and Rey seemed to be taking the prospect of going over hours of tape with excitement. Eventually, Rey reached over to clasp his knee.

“This is why you need me, right?” She winked. “We’re a team now. We’ll help you fill in the gaps. It’s okay, Kylo.”

He reached for her hand and managed a small smile at her. “I can still feel some damaged pride, though.”

“Just a little,” she leaned over to kiss him. “Come on. It will be fun. I’ll go to the tape room and get it set up.”

She left and Poe watched her go, then looked back at him.

“Okay, spill.”

“We…I…we’re together. I’ve fallen in love with her and I never imagined finding someone like her,” he looked down at the remnants of his lunch. He’d managed to eat more than usual that day, probably mostly out of annoyance with himself. “Things…things don’t always go right. I’ve seen her die too many times. But every morning, she’s alive and lets me talk her into loving me back. I don’t know how I’d have gotten through all of this without her and, well, you.”

“That must be hard,” the other man leaned back. “So if she dies today…”?

“Then we try again tomorrow,” he replied. “He’s giving me this choice, well more like a series of choices. The first clue, the first taunt was between him and her. I think that him must mean the boy, but he’s safe. So I choose her and will keep her from dying. Maybe him means Anakin himself? He thinks he’s clever but really, he’s just insane.”

“What’s the other choice?”

“He…he wants me. We either kill him, I work with him in the loop, or he…he kills me and I need to accept it,” he frowned. “I don’t think that I’ve told Rey this yet. Maybe I have. The days sort of run together.”

“Well, you’d never work with him, that’s out of the question,” Poe nodded. “So you have to kill him.”
Kylo looked down again, remembering his thoughts at the bar.

“Or…?”

“I… Poe, I know you don’t really know me today but, I think that we’re almost friends in the other todays,” he couldn’t look at him as he spoke. Maybe missing the evidence made him realize how damaged he was. “I respect your work and your devotion to your family. I know what Bebe did was a form of betrayal, but I think you can get passed it. But, I’ve started thinking about just, you know, giving in to him in that way. I’ve seen so many things that I don’t know how I’ll sleep when this is all over. I’ve seen that man I beat the hell out of raping her and then killing her. She died against me because the monster immobilized me, to make me feel powerless as they...destroyed her. Now, I have to look at her and pretend I don’t see that all of the time. I’ve seen you take your own life, the same with Finn. It’s a jumble of life and death and if I just let him end me, then you all would be safe. The loop would be over and then Rey can just… be with someone who won’t remember her, broken and bleeding and dying in immeasurable pain. Pain that I’ve caused.”

Poe moved to Rey’s empty chair and actually pulled him into a hug. He took a deep breath, not sure where the words had just come from.

“Kylo, you’re right, I don’t know you today, but I…” he pulled away, sitting back. “I can’t imagine how much all of that must suck. You don’t look like the same person you were yesterday. I saw you smile and you just let me hug you. That’s saying something.”

Kylo finally met his eyes, seeing empathy mixed with resolve.

“But that other part, the part where you want to just give up and think the world would be better off without you, don’t think that way,” he looked at him firmly. “You’ve got her. You can talk to her. She’ll understand. Hell, you can come talk to me. I’ve got my demons that I’m also fighting. We see death all the time, but we also have so many good things that we can do in this world. You, my friend, will get him.”

He finally stood and stretched.

Kylo followed, still not feeling convinced, but was glad to have shared his thoughts.

“So, let’s go to work.”

The video room was unbelievably frustrating. They put another tech to work on retracing the car that Hux had taken. Poe took the truck, and Rey looked up the movements of their tattooed suspect. He had the maddening task of looking for a homeless man in a city filled with downtrodden people. There was hours of work ahead of him.

He had to work backwards from where he’d been spotted crossing the street. A bank camera had caught it. Timing his pace, he looked through another camera, not that far away. There he was again, still shuffling along. Whoever this Snoke person was, he didn’t have much to live for. He was nameless and faceless and only important in this day. Going back even further, he looked for him from another intersection with frustration. He checked again for nearby homeless shelters or reported congregating areas. With the direction he was coming from, there were three possibilities. He angrily searched the tapes from the three locations, despite some of the quality and angles, and finally spotted what he needed. That’s where the homeless man woke up every morning. He followed the tape back to when Anakin approached him, just after 5 a.m. He didn’t wake up until around 6 a.m. That part still bothered him; why could he control the day and when Anakin could change other things?
“I’ve got him,” he said. “We’ve got him meeting Anakin.”

The homeless man lingered for a few minutes, dazed, before going back to sleep. Annoyed, he sped through the tape. He didn’t leave until 7 a.m., to start making his way to where their initial meeting should have been. He wrote down the address, looking at it several times to memorise it and nodded to himself. One less problem.

Dameron called him over. “Here’s your truck, getting stolen. I got it on a security camera. He didn’t have to go far to get to Brooklyn.”

Kylo looked at the stilled image. This was around 5.15 a.m. Again, he couldn’t control what happened until he woke up. He thought he had planned a perfect day and now he had when it started at least. He wouldn’t be able to do anything about the truck if this happened again, except rely on Dameron.

“Can you see it anywhere else?”

Dameron shook his head. “I’ll keep looking. Show me where he’s hit you before on one of your other…todays or whatever.”

He slid a small map over and Dameron nodded.

“Can you imagine how insane you have to be to just keep running that intersection, expecting someone to be there?” Poe shook his head.

“It was…it was really bad,” he looked over at Rey. “She was hurt really bad.”

Poe slowly leaned back and eyed him. “Have you thought about all of the other people in this city having bad days? I mean, in the loop, you’ve been so focused on this case. I mean, I appreciate that you care about me and all that, it’s really sweet, but I mean…make a bet on a baseball game. Check the lottery numbers. Give some money to poor people.”

Kylo stared at him, feeling anger starting to rise before he clamped it down. He looked at the flood of traffic on the other monitors and sighed. “Who would I choose? There’s too many people. I can’t help them all.”

Dameron slowly nodded. “That…I guess that’s fair. I mean…I can’t even talk to my sister about her problems. I try to help her, but I can’t believe she brought it this far. What am I supposed to say to her? If I can’t help my family, how can we help strangers?”

Rey leaned over from her monitor with soft eyes. Dameron was right. Like with her, he had been so focused on what he needed and wanted. He remembered the screams of the children at the rec centre and how hard Finn worked to help them out. How could he help them? He hadn’t really bothered to check the news all day.

He turned to helping Rey with the dodgy movements of the man in black. He would pop up here and there and they finally traced him back from meeting Finn to taking the subway. At the entrance to the subway not far the flophouse, they saw him descending the stairs. It was before 4 a.m. Again, nothing they could do. They followed him through the day. He moved constantly on a mission, but never on the phone whenever he was on camera. Anakin had really just relied on thinking he was smarter than they were.

“There,” Rey said. “That’s him heading back to his place before we met him today. At 9.20.”

He stood and stretched. “So, now we have when the assassin leaves, but it’s too early. But now we
have this. This is good, really good.”

The other tech didn’t have much and that bothered him. Following the car from out of town worked at the toll cameras, but it was not very distinctive in the city.

Kylo finally sighed. They’d been working for four hours and had made incredible gains, mostly based on what he knew and what they had found that day.

“If anything, Hux is the one that drops the Windu girl. We can get him there,” he stood. “We showed that today. Send unmarked cars next time and take him out at 7.55.”

Rey frowned. “You’re starting to sound like this isn’t the last day. We already have them in custody. Anakin is the last link and he’s a ghost. We get him here and there but he never stays long.”

Firming his face, Kylo looked at her. “I’ve been waiting for this to be the last day for so long that I want to be prepared for something, anything, to go wrong. If we mess this up, I don’t think I’ve got that many days left before Anakin wins and you’re all stuck with his terror forever.”

Rey stood beside him, resting her hand on his lower back. “We won’t let that happen.”

He checked his watch. “I can’t see straight anymore. And my mother still hasn’t called. I think we should go talk to Kenobi before the fundraiser. See if he remembers the accident. I need to talk to people and not monitors for a while.”

Poe looked up at him and smirked. “I thought you hated people.”

“Well, some people are starting to grow on me,” he returned the look. “We’ll be in touch. Thanks for your help today.”

They gave a quick update to the captain, who was still alive but looking stressed when they approached his office. “We’re getting nothing from them. They just keep repeatedly asking for you, and saying something about your mutual friend.”

Kylo almost laughed. “We’re going to go talk to Kenobi now. He’s a part of this and he might be able to tell us something about his motivations.”

Tekka again gave them a long look. “I’m actually glad I paired you two up. This has been…phenomenal work.”

“Thank you,” he said. “But still keep everyone under watch. Our killer still hasn’t contacted us. I can’t imagine what he’s planning.”

With the last warning, they left the building into the late afternoon sunlight.

“I almost forgot it was daytime,” he mumbled. “We’re almost too early.”

“What do we do?”

A daring thought crossed his mind. “I think I’d like to go home and change. He can’t follow us anymore, and we’ve shut down his network. Yesterday’s clothes are starting to get to me.”

She slowly nodded, noticing the way he looked her up and down, taking his hand. They crossed the city again by taxi, to his apartment. Rey kept lightly touching him, trying to keep him from slipping into negative thoughts again. He took her lingering touches with small smiles and
eventually leaned over to kiss her. She deepened it, letting her tongue explore his mouth and running her hand up his thigh. She rubbed small circles on his inner thigh and he sighed, feeling warmth spread through his body. In the dark corners of his mind, he contemplated the fact that she could still die tonight. Even if everything was right, maybe he hadn’t done enough.

Finally home, his eyes swept the street outside his apartment. No black figures lurking for him.

“Hey,” she said, slipping her hands under his suit coat. “Let’s go upstairs. I’ll help you change”

He looked down and smirked at her. “Is this about making me feel better?”

“A little bit,” she tilted her head. “Maybe it’s a little bit of what I want too.”

He rubbed the back of her neck. “What do you want?”

She sighed into his hand. “Maybe the same thing that you want?”

There were no frantic kisses exchanged in the elevator, only teasing looks and touches. This could be slow, not rushed and filled with sadness and frenzy. He still locked the door, looking at her with hunger when she put her hands on his hips as he leaned against the door.

“Do you really want me?” He asked.

Her lips parted and she licked her lips. “I was going to ask you the same thing.”

“Every day, always.”

He lightly kissed her, teasing her mouth open and she sighed when he hands settled around her waist. Her hands ran through his hair and he let her guide him towards his bedroom. Her bag was still by the door, he caught out of the corner of his eye when he pulled back to look at her.

“Why couldn’t I see how beautiful you were before?” He asked, mostly to himself.

“Maybe you didn’t really see me before?”

She reached for the edge of his pants, continuing towards the bedroom. He could almost feel the ghosts starting to fade as he kissed her again when she sat down on the edge of his bed. He took off his holster, setting it within arm’s reach of the bed.

“Rey, you really are the only good thing about today,” he tipped her chin up. “I love you.”

She smiled at him. “Then show me.”

She rose again, helping him undo his shirt in careful, light motions. She slipped it off and slightly frowned at the ghost scars. Her hand caressed his shoulder and shook her head, lightly kissing the hints of previous damage from the other todays. He watched as she kneeled on the bed, removing her own clothes.

“You’ve been hurt so much,” she said. “How are you still standing?”

He took in her body like it was the first time as she took off her weapon, blouse and pants. Her gun sat on the opposite bed stand. He realised that he always wanted it to rest there from now on. He licked his lips and lifted his shoulders.

“Some days are better than others?”
“Like today?” She was on her knees, in her underwear on his unmade bed. He knelt down across from her, encircling her waist again with gently prodding hands.

“Today might be the end of this,” he tilted his head to kiss her. “And I’ll have you forever.”

A brief sadness flashed across her face and she tried to shake it off, looking back with slightly upturned lips.

“What?” He kissed her neck, up her jaw.

“Please mean that, Kylo,” her hands moved up his back as he continued to trail his lips up her face. “Please mean everything what you’re saying. I’ve been alone for so long and…no one has ever really cared about me.”

“I mean everything, Rey,” he kissed her lips and met her eyes. “Tomorrow, when this is over, I’ll tell you all the ways that I love you and the days we’ve shared. You’re not alone anymore.”

“Neither are you.”

He was hard against her and didn’t want to talk anymore. Being inside of her would help him chase away his ghosts and her sorrow. Kissing her again, he deepened it, feeling her mouth and savouring the soft taste of her. She guided him down, letting him continue to kiss her, resting on top of her. She wrapped her legs around him, aligning their bodies. He felt her grind against his erection and nipped at her ear. Massaging her still-clothed breast, he heard her gasp was he found her erect nipple. He met her eyes and she nodded.

Reaching behind her, he undid the familiar bra clasp. Half-naked below her, he kissed down her chest to circle her rose-coloured nipple. Her hands ran across his chest and down his side, as she learnt his body for the first, yet also not, time. Her movements were always innocent and careful; her hand stopped again on his scarred shoulder. He paused to meet her eyes.

“It doesn’t hurt that much,” he smirked. “It’s okay.”

He toyed with the hem of her panties as she still studied the wound.

“You really have lived through today before.”

“It’s not all bad.”

He sat back, gently guiding her legs from his waist. Her eyes darkened as he ran over the lace that covered her lower parts. She bit her lip when he looked up at her, his fingers sliding underneath the sides, and nodded.

She lifted her hips as he took the undergarment off, sliding it down her legs. Sitting up, he looked down at her and smiled.

“You’re so beautiful,” he ran his hand down her leg.

Spreading her legs, he settled between them, gently massaging her clit.

“You…you really have done this before,” she gasped.

He smirked, dipping his mouth to taste her and flick her with his tongue. She always tasted the same and he didn’t mind this form of repeating. She was wet and squirming under his mouth. He met her eyes as she gazed down at him before resting her head against the pillow. He gently
slipped two fingers inside of her, hooking them lightly to find the sensitive spot within her. She moaned, arching her hips at his touch. He felt his own erection starting to strain at the sounds and tastes of her. But he wanted to focus on her first.

Moving his fingers, he returned them to quickly start rubbing her clit, he looked down at her closed eyes, her mouth agape as he brought her closer to the edge. Her breath hitched and she cried out, shifting her legs to push him away. He leaned down onto her, kissing her as she rode her orgasm. She met his mouth, tugging at his boxers.

“Now, Kylo, please.”

Somewhat awkwardly, he tugged off his underwear and he rubbed his dick against her sensitive clit and she gasped again. Kicking off the last part, he was finally free to be inside her again. He entered her and she returned her legs to wrap around his waist. He tugged her closer and lost focus as he felt himself fully inside her. She rolled her hips as he slowly began to thrust. He wanted this too last, but it was just too perfect. She’d brought him close just by letting him tease her with his mouth.

Tapping her leg, he whispered in her ear. “Turn over.”

She nodded, shifting to her knees with a brief and wicked grin. He stroked himself as she shifted over. Running his hand down her back, he guided himself inside her again. This position, having her like this, would really push him over the edge. This was his day and she was his again.

She seemed to be lost in each thrust as he moved inside her. It was too much. He felt the pressure starting to build and caressed her lower back. “Are you…can I?”

“Yes,” she moaned. “Yes, come inside me.”

He blissed out at his orgasm, seeing white. She moaned at the sensation of him filling her. Gasping lightly, letting his head get back to him, he didn’t want to leave her body. She was warm and wet and just perfect.

Gently, but reluctantly he pulled out. She slowly rolled over and he laid beside her to meet her lips again.

“Was that okay?” He ran his hand on the back of her neck.

She just smiled. “That was…amazing, Kylo. Thank you.”

She briefly played with his hair before rolling off the bed to use the toilet. He sat on the edge of the bed, waiting for her to return. They wouldn’t have time to rest, but he felt a need to sleep descend upon him. She strolled back in and kissed him on the cheek. He ran his hand down her thigh before using the washroom himself. After splashing water on his face, he studied his eyes. Still brown. Not yellow. He wasn’t like that monster.

She snuggled next to him and he sighed at having her naked against him. Maybe Anakin had shot himself and saved them the trouble. She yawned and he stroked her hair as her head rested on his bare chest. He wanted to let go of the lingering stress, but he was coming for them in one way or another. They were safe here, but for how long?

They couldn’t rest for long. He eventually sighed. “Let’s have a shower and then get going.”

She grinned at him again, letting him take her to the washroom and run a warm shower. There were more playful kisses and fondling under the water. He’d have her again if they didn’t have to
put together the final parts of the day. Leaving the warmth of the water, he wrapped a towel around her and kissed her again.

She looked up at him and anything he had to say died on his lips. There was really nothing left to say.

“I love you,” she said. “That could be the orgasm talking, but I think it’s me too.”

“We’ll get through today together,” he lightly brushed his lips against hers. “Get your clothes on and we’ll go get Kenobi.”

He was changing into fresh clothes when she returned from the living room, holding a fresh pair of underwear from her bag. It was almost like she already lived there, not just died there.

They kissed one last time on the street, waiting for the taxi. It was time to return to the case and the day. The ride to the hotel was quiet as he scrolled through his phone, noting the other events of the day. Robberies, murders, assaults, suspected suicides. The events of his day had blinded him to the rest of the city. Part of his brain recorded the times of these events. Just in case.

Reaching the hotel, they asked for Kenobi. He was upstairs, in the ballroom, getting ready. They finally found him in the men’s room, after getting directions from a busy hotel worker, on the second floor. He gave Rey a sharp look when he left her outside the room.

“Just watch out.”

“I will,” her hand lingered on his waist as he knocked on the door and entered.

“Dr Kenobi, I need to speak with you.”

The older man turned, looking at him with mild confusion. He was fixing his tuxedo, clearly going over the speech he had to give later. The guests wouldn’t arrive for over an hour.

“I’m sorry? Who are you?”

He needed to take another gamble. “Ben Solo. I’m a detective with the NYPD. I’m here to talk to you about Anakin Skywalker and how he’s trying to ruin your career.”

A smile crinkled the other man’s face. “Oh really? He’s been looking for you, you know?”

“Yes, we have some unfinished business,” he kept his focus on the other man. “He’s killing these children to be able to manipulate you into doing what he wants. You can’t warn him that we’re here. He’s dangerous and will kill without thinking. He blames you for something that happened a long time ago.”

Kenobi adjusted his bowtie, stepping away from the mirror. “I still don’t understand what you’re saying, detective. Why would Anakin be killing children? To get to me?”

“You never believe me,” Kylo rolled his eyes. “Look, he’s been pressing you for far longer than these last two weeks. He’s been wearing you down, looping over and over again. He makes you forget. He blames you for his wife’s death. He kept repeating that day and he couldn’t save her and thinks that you caused the accident. Please, Ben. Listen to me, don’t fall into his plan to ruin your career. I can stop him.”

Kenobi finally met his eyes. “What…what are you saying that happened?”
“Can you remember? Coming to visit as a kid? Think.”

Kenobi blinked, leaning against the sink. “I… I never came to America until I was more or less an adult…”

Kylo just stared at him, leaning forward to corner him against the counter. “Think harder. Think about how you could have had such a connection with my parents, Han and Leia. That wasn’t a coincidence; I think that he meant for you to meet to set this all in motion.”

He looked at Kylo as he stepped back.

“I… how could…” he stammered. “I don’t… I remember getting on an airplane and landing and then… when was this?”

“He’s made you forget, and now he’s getting what he wants,” he shook his head. “Drop out of the race. Go back to medicine. You’re giving him what he wants.”

Kenobi hung his head. “I… he called me this afternoon.”

Kylo wanted to grab him and shake him but stood still. “What did he say?”

He just looked at his reflection. “He was so unbelievably angry. He wasn’t making any sense. Apparently, with all of his collaborators getting arrested, his usual network has shut him out, not wanting to be connected to this. I don’t know what you did, but you did it. But he said he would find a way to get to you. And it wouldn’t be pretty.”

“Look, Ben, for my mother, just don’t give up,” he said. “I will stop him.”

Kenobi still looked mildly shocked as Kylo stalked out of the washroom. Rey was still outside, waiting for him.

“Did he listen?”

Kylo shook his head. “I don’t know. But Anakin was in touch with him. He’s totally alone now. He doesn’t know where Quirin is, mom and Luke are safe. Everything is as it should be. He’ll show up sooner or later and make his deal.”

“Where do we go now?” Her shoulders sagged.

“We… we talk to mom and Luke again. We ask them if they’ve found anything in the chest and exactly where it is,” he rolled his shoulders. “I wish that we had time to drive to Albany and get back. There’s no way to prove this to them.”

Rey nodded. “What do we do now?”

He rubbed the back of his neck. “What time is it?”

“Five,” she shrugged. He hummed to himself, thinking of another dangling lead.

“Let’s call your doctor friend, Yoda, and get invited over for dinner,” he suggested. “I think that he knows Anakin, just by a different name.”

She snorted softly. “Of course you would have met Yoda.”

“Here,” he held up Kenobi’s wallet that he had pickpocketed. “Maybe we can treat him to something. He did help us out a couple of times.”
She laughed as he started to leave the hotel. Ahsoka was just leaving to get her coffee and he stopped her.

“Miss? You dropped this,” he handed her a $20 he had discreetly pulled out of the wallet.

“Oh! Thank you,” she smiled brightly at him as they moved by her. He caught Rey’s raised eyebrows.

“It’s not what you think,” he said.

“I think that I will need a detailed breakdown of every day once all of this is over.”

He pulled her into a deep kiss as Ahsoka walked by to cross the street. He held Rey close, loving every moment they had in relative freedom.

“It’s only been you,” he looked at her. “Always.”

She actually giggled. “Happy looks good on you.”

In the cab, she called Yoda. She nodded more on the phone than she talked, occasionally looking at Kylo to roll her eyes. “Sure, doctor, we’ll come by your place. See you soon.”

“What did he say?”

“I can’t understand him half the time, but his heart is in the right place,” she took his hand again. She missed him when he didn’t touch her; that thought made his heart rise again, dangerously close to hope. “His apartment is just beside his clinic.”

He gave the address and the driver nodded. She gave him another sly smile at the things he seemingly knew without asking. Again, he felt lingering déjà vu and thought that he recognised the cabbie.

“So, you’ve been there before?”

“Yes, the other time he made a house call,” he paused to think about how to phrase that day. “I…woke up in bad shape. I fought against going to the hospital and it ended up hurting us more than helping. That’s the time I had one of the first conversations with my grandfather. He…killed you in front of me. But that’s part of the reason I can’t die that many more times. I get better after a couple of loops but I need to avoid dying in horrible ways.”

“When was the last time you…died?”

He frowned. “I…we…we finally had almost all the clues. I was shot that morning and was just not in any mood to play his game. We…spent the night at Maz’s. With our friends, the ones that we’ve made today. I…I’ve never really had that type of night before. Maybe I had lost focus, but maybe I also needed something nice. Then, I took you home. You were happy and drunk and I couldn’t tell you that he was outside, waiting for us. We made love, but he had turned up the Carbon Monoxide in the building. We died together. That’s the last time.”

“You’re stronger than he is,” she squeezed his hand. “I…I didn’t mean that as a real joke before. You’ll have to tell me everything one day. I don’t want you keeping this to yourself.”

“Poe said the same thing to me,” he took a quick glance out the window. “I…I never really had friends. I pushed so many people away. After my dad died, the only focus I had was getting out and away. Then I got on the job, and that became my life. Colleagues were colleagues. I used them how
I needed them and put myself first. I was…I was not a good person.”

“But now, here you are,” she slid closer to him, kissing him on the cheek. “A much better person, who might be damaged from what he’s seen but it’s something we’ll get through it.”

“So if there’s a tomorrow, you’ll stay with me.”

Instantly, she shook her head yes. “You’ve done something to me, Kylo. You’ve made me believe that you can fall in love with someone in one day.”

He kissed her deeply, almost wanting to forget the strange backwards-talking man and the lingering threat from his grandfather. He ran his hands up her back, wanting more. But his phone interrupted them. He briefly groaned, but refocused. It was his mother. Again, he answered, expecting terrible news.

“Hi mom. Is everything okay?”

“Oh, yeah. We’ve just been chatting over old memories. We found her diary and this letter…”

“I know about that. I’m not giving that to him. Wait, mom, was the envelope sealed?”

“No, it was just folded up. The envelope was open, just folded in.”

He nodded. “So, he’s already read it and just ignored it. Did you find anything else?”

There was a brief pause and he waited her out. She needed her space with her memories, no matter what was on the line.

Leia’s voice was clear and firm. “I found this picture. It’s…it’s my mother. It’s old, Ben. It was in the back of her diary, tucked into the back.”

“Who else is in the picture?” He asked, sitting up straighter. “Mom?”

“Two boys. They’re in the nursery, everyone is smiling,” he heard her turn the picture over. “Me, Sheev and Benny, finishing the nursery. Taken by Mrs Kenobi. 1955.”

“Mom, that’s great! Was there anything else? Take a picture of it, front and back, and send it to me. When…when it’s tomorrow we’ll show it to Kenobi and Palpatine. They’ll remember then. And we can undo Anakin’s game,” he looked over at Rey and grinned.

“Are you sure this will be enough?”

“Yes, they’ll recognise themselves. Whatever mind game he has been playing, this is proof that they were there. We can…we can undo some of his harm,” he took Rey’s hand and nodded. “He…he still hasn’t done anything. He talked to Kenobi, and he’s mad. It’s making us nervous.”

“Where are you now?”

“We’re going to meet a friend. Then we’ll go check out the Cathedral. He will call me. He must be seething.”

She sighed. “Look, Luke and I are tired. Do you think he’d be after us?”

He sadly nodded, mostly to himself. “Lock the door. Stay awake and alert. Get dad’s gun and just…if anything happens, mom, kill him. Mom…there’s something else…”
“I know Ben,” she sighed. “He’s the one that killed your father.”

He sucked in a hard breath. “Did you know before?”

“No,” he heard her shaking her head. “Your father was acting strange the day that he died. And just thinking about it, it reminded me of what you’re saying and doing. It must have been Anakin. He must also hate Luke and me for taking Padmé.”

“I’m going to stop him mom. For you, dad, the children, and Rey. I won’t let him get away with this.”

“Be…be safe Ben.”

He hung up the phone and turned to Rey. “We have the final piece. We can undo some of the damage tomorrow once he shows.”

Rey leaned against him. “Now it’s just waiting.”

He kissed her forehead. “It’s…it’s all we can do. We know two places where he might be: the shack and the Cathedral.”

“Why the that place? A church?”

“He…he circled it on the map he gave to Palpatine on another today. There’s something about that place,” he looked distant. “He likes to be dramatic.”

They pulled up again to the clinic. Kylo was glad to stretch his legs again, feeling tired every time he sat still. The afternoon doing real research had reminded him of what real life would be like when they got back to it. It was a slightly boring prospect, but one that he would welcome at this point. But making love to her in the lingering afternoon light had shown him the beautiful things that would also come with normal life.

Rey rang the buzzer outside and the door opened to her. His apartment was on the ground floor. He wasn’t really surprised, given how the old man shuffled around.

The small, wrinkled face greeted them. “Hello Rey! Glad to see you I am. Ill you are?”

“No, no Yoda. We’re here for, well, we’d like to have dinner with you. Can we come in? Maybe go out to eat?”

The old man waved them in and scoffed. “Enough food I have for you and…?”

“Kylo,” he said. “I’m her…”

“He’s just mine,” she took his hand. “I know it was sudden, but we have some questions about an old doctor you might know as well.”

“Hmm,” he shuffled inside. Kylo closed and locked the door. He didn’t mind being inside, but any door still made him uneasy. “Eat first. Then questions. Stew I am making. Plenty of stew. Stew for even one as big as you.”

“He doesn’t eat that much,” Rey gave him a light grin.

“I do, I eat a lot,” he teased back. “Just not when I’m working.”

“Working you are not now,” Yoda shuffled to the stove in the small apartment. There was really
only a kitchen, an adjacent couch which seemed to double as a bed, and a washroom off to the side. The room was lit with fairly dim yellow lights. He looked around at the décor and it was mostly bookshelves, filled with old medical journals and leather bound books.

He took a bottle of red wine off the counter.

“Wine I have, from Georgia,” he moved to the small table. “Republic, not state.”

Rey gave him a careful look. It was going to be a long day but damn it, one glass of wine wasn’t going to kill them. If anything, Anakin was. If he knew his grandfather, this was all going to happen around midnight. That was nearly six hours away.

The aged man brought down three glasses. “We…we might have to drive later.”

He nodded. “Little wine. For tasting.”

Kylo felt like he towered over the man and took a seat. “Thank you for having us.”

Yoda gave him a long look and seemed to frown. “Saw you I have. Dream I had. Injured you were.”

He looked at Rey in surprise. She took the seat next to him and took his hand.

“How was I injured?” He carefully asked.

Yoda brought out three bowls and set them at their places, ignoring his question. “Interested in dreams you are? Dreams you have had?”

“I had a dream about my father,” he said quickly. “He was telling me how the man killing the children in the city is the one who killed him.”

“Much truth there is in dreams,” he pointed a Kylo and motioned towards the cast-iron pot on the stove. “Help me you must. Heavy this is. Talk we must, Rey.”

Like eating with Poe, this felt like doing a normal thing on a normal day. Rey started asking about people he didn’t know but he still gladly took in other parts of her life. She seemed to know Yoda from some clinic she had volunteered at after high school. Having a half glass of wine made him relax, just enjoying spending time with her. He thought about the day that had happened, and what they had done together. It was finally coming together, but he was still prepared for it to fall apart. Sending Quirin out of town and putting everyone into safety had isolated the things he could use to hurt him. But he would find a way.

“So, questions you have,” Yoda said, taking his second glass of wine.

“Yes, a doctor named Vader who you knew,” he said. “He had the same problem that I am having.”

With narrowed eyes he nodded. “Same day, you believe you are living.”

He nodded. “I don’t just believe I am, I know I am. I’ve died and so has she. It isn’t just something in my head. I have scars and have woken up injured.”

Rey nodded. “I’ve seen them. They’re not like normal scars; it’s like the skin hasn’t really been broken, but you can feel where the wound was.”

“Hmm,” he said, hopping from his chair. He reached for a book on the shelf. “Worked with him I
did, briefly. Experimental clinic he had, working on rare disorders. Early 80s this was. Angry man, he was. Friend I tried to be. Died his wife did, long ago. Talked about her often.”

He opened up the large book. It was a photo album. Kylo sat up straighter, waiting as the old man turned the pages. “Ah, yes. Here it is.”

Yoda handed him the book and he recognized the face instantly. “That’s Anakin. Rey, that’s my grandfather. He’s…he’s older now. But not that much older. He must be over 90. How is that possible?”

“Perhaps, immortality there is in the time loop,” Yoda mumbled. “If time loop you believe in.”

Kylo stared at the picture of the bitter face of the man, surrounded by men in white coats in a corridor. How long had he been hunting children like him? Was he trying to use the time loop to get back to her?

“Kylo, could he have used that name to perform medicine? It wouldn’t take much to find him with a name like that. If he was hiding from his family, from his children, take another name,” she said.

His thoughts levelled into a deep strain on his heart. He was just like his grandfather. Taking another name and trying to hide from his past. And he loved someone so much that he couldn’t let go. He stared at the man that was hunting him and felt emptiness inch onto his earlier good mood. Maybe Poe and Rey were wrong. Maybe he wasn’t a better person who was worth anything. If he hadn’t been related to his father or grandfather, both him and Quirin wouldn’t have been in the loop. He wouldn’t have brought Rey so much death and pain. His vision blurred and he blinked back tears.

Rey cleared her throat and closed the book, handing it back to Yoda. “Thank you, doctor. We have what we need. And thank you so much for dinner. I think we’re going to head out now. We’ve had a very long day and it’s not over yet.”

“Yes,” he finally said, rubbing his face. “I…thank you.”

Yoda looked at him with sad eyes, but nodded. “See yourselves out. Lovely meal we had, Rey. See you soon, I will. Kylo, think you should, about what made you search your soul just now. Answers I do not have. Answers you must find in yourself.”

Kylo gave him a soft nod and followed Rey out the door. He tried to ignore her look by checking his phone. Poe had texted that everything was fine, and wondered how he was. He thought about deleting it, wanting to fall into old habits, but instead replied that they were still waiting. His mother had texted as well, and he replied that they were still waiting. Rey slipped her arm under his.

“What were you thinking about?”

He exhaled. “Just…just remembering things.”

She pulled him on, nudging him to the corner where they could catch a cab. He pulled her closer. It was early evening and they still had no true word from Anakin. He kept looking at everyone around them on the street, drifting off in his thoughts.

“Kylo, come on, talk to me,” she demanded softly, waving at a cab. He finally was able to look at her when they climbed inside. He didn’t know what address to give.

“We should probably go check the Cathedral, he might be there,” he said. “And with the Vader
clue, we can find previous clusters of murders and connect them to him. He has done this before.”

She nodded. “St. Pat’s please.”

He rested his head on her shoulder and finally started to talk. “He just…reminded me of me.”

“Kylo, no,” she said. “You’re nothing like him.”

“I changed my name to avoid my family,” he countered, rubbing a small circle on her knee. “I also pushed so many people away for so long being angry. And I can’t let go of you and you keep dying, no matter what I do.”

“I told you, that’s not you anymore,” she shook her head. “Don’t compare yourself to him. You’ve been doing everything to stop him. You’ve kept going, even after all that’s happened.”

“There were days that I gave up, Rey, in the beginning,” he closed his eyes. “You died alone those days, in ways that I can’t imagine. I just hid, wanting to avoid the world and the loop. I gave up before I had any of the clues. What sort of person does that?”

She ran her fingers through his hair. “A normal person. If you cared about me, and you saw me die in horrible ways, then you were grieving. You can’t blame yourself for that. We’re here now. We’re going to get him, okay? Forget those days, focus on this today.”

He sat up, wanting to argue, but it died on his lips. “You’re actually right. You were the one that insisted I take a break, and that helped. It’s still helping, in away. You wanted to make me happy when…when we got married.”

She smirked at him. “When were you going to tell me that?”

“At some point,” he licked his lips. “In the future. You got mad at first when I told you last time.”

She ran her hand down his cheek. “You’re unbelievable.”

“In a good way?”

“Mostly a good way.”

He kissed her lightly and rested his head against her shoulder again. “I just want this to be over. Where is he? What’s he doing?”

“Should…should we wait?” She asked, moving around the immense space. “Maybe he’ll show up later?”

He glanced at his watch. “If he wants to make one last threat against Kenobi, he’s at the fundraiser
by now.”

Looking up at the altar, he shuddered at a ghost memory. He couldn’t grasp it; he wasn’t sure if it was something he’d forgotten from before the loop, or something that wasn’t real. Memories of getting blown up outside clouded his thoughts, overlaying the illusive feeling that was teasing him.

“Do we go there and follow him?” Rey asked, shifting her weight from side to side.

“That’s a good idea,” he reached for her. “This place makes me feel…weird.”

“It’s sort of creepy,” she said. “Let’s go.”

Back at the hotel, he saw none of the scenes that he’d witnessed before. There were none of the staff running around, and none of the well-dressed people smoking outside. Moving to the front desk, he asked about the fundraiser.

“Dr Kenobi has postponed it, suddenly,” the young man said. “Something about an important guest being unable to make it. It will be later this month.”

Kylo just blinked, turning to Rey. “Maybe we got to him.”

“That would be a good thing,” she said. “But it doesn’t really help us.”

Returning to the darkened, empty Cathedral, they paced inside, waiting. A night watchman shone his flashlight at them and they told him who they were. He frowned and left them alone. The hours ticked by and they sat down in the front pew, staring at the dimly lit altar.

He scrolled through his phone again, just spending the time reading and waiting. Just after 9, he hit update on a website and sighed to himself. Now he had his insurance for tomorrow if the worst happened. He quickly memorised the numbers and sat back to pull Rey close to him.

“I hate just waiting,” she mumbled, resting her head on his shoulder.

“Me too.”

It was just after 9.30. Still no attack or warning. Anakin was going to make this a long night.

As if someone was reading his mind, he phone started buzzing. It was a number he didn’t recognise. His heart started to pound. He nudged Rey, who sat up and stared at his phone, her breathing getting quicker as he answered.

“Hello?”

Instead of his grandfather, a panicked female voice cried onto the phone. “Detective Ren?”

“Kristina?” He grabbed Rey’s shoulder. “What’s going on? What happened?”

“We were…we were at dinner at our hotel. Quirin went to bed a half an hour ago and we went for a walk and…and now he’s gone and there’s…there’s a note for Ben Solo,” she was gasping, crying, “My maiden name is Solo. What…I don’t know…any Ben. What…where is my son?”

“We…we’re going to go find him. We’ll save him, Kristina. I promise.” He hung up, looking at Rey with fear in his eyes.

“The shack. We have to get there. He’s already ahead of us.”
She nodded, panicked. “What if we don’t get there in time?”

“We have to.” He met her eyes. “And if we don’t, we try again tomorrow.”

Why had they just waited? Why didn’t he think that he had the Jinns’ credit card as well? Why was he always missing something?

His phone rang again. It had to be Anakin.

“Are you waiting for me?” He asked. “I think I’ve changed my mind about where we should do this, Ben. You’ve really annoyed me today. I don’t think that this will be the end until you give me what I want.”

Anakin didn’t even let him reply. He grabbed Rey by the arm and pulled her towards the door. They needed a car. They needed to get to the shack. He messed this up again and Anakin was enraged.

Dashing into traffic, he pointed his gun at the first car that stopped. Rey stood to the side, shocked again by his rapid actions.

“NYPD!” He shouted, aiming his weapon at the driver. “Get out of the car and leave the keys.”

Shaking, a young woman climbed out of the car, “What…what did I do?”

“We need your car,” he instructed, gesturing her to step away from the vehicle. Her eyes were wide as they both entered her car. “You’ll get it back tomorrow.”

He drove off as Rey did up her seatbelt. She shook her head and frowned.

“Kylo…”

He hushed her. “I know it was wrong. But we didn’t have any other choice. The taxi would take too long and doesn’t know the way. I do.”

She gripping his leg. “Let’s just get to him.”

All he could focus on was how stupid and played he felt. He’d let Anakin win again and get to Quirin. He put the boy in danger again and was taking her right to him.

“Rey, I could drop you off,” he said. “I’ll go there and kill him and he won’t have a chance to hurt you.”

“I’m not leaving you, Kylo,” her voice was firm. “We go together. Partners.”

“Partners.”

The streets were ungodly busy. Not having a police car would slow them down, but he drove focused, and tried to dial back how reckless he started to feel. They couldn’t die now. It would hurt too much tomorrow. Finally on the more open freeway, he could increase the speed, only slightly above the speed limit. No way in hell was he getting pulled over now.

“Rey, no matter what happens…” he started to say.

“Kylo, don’t,” she said. “I love you. I know you love me. No goodbyes. We’re going to get him.”

He looked at her and gave her a firm nod. There was silence in the car and he fell into his thoughts.
again. Loving her had brought her nothing but hurt and pain. He would keep the loop going to save her and be with her. It was selfish. He didn’t deserve her. Anakin couldn’t let go; maybe he should.

Taking the last turn, he readied himself for what was to come. The driveway seemed more worn this time, but it was still familiar. He stopped the car, killing the engine. He would know that they were there, but it would give them a few seconds of surprise to not pull right up.

Running across the grass, he spotted the other car and dread settled over him at how dark the building was.

He was focused on the shack, when a strike out of nowhere met his temple and everything went black.

Finally swimming up from the darkness, his head hurt and he couldn’t move his arm. He tugged at it, feeling cold metal on his wrist. He felt heavy and slow.

“Kylo, wake up.”

He shook his head, not really able to see straight. A distant feeling of a concussion made him tired, even as he awoke beside Rey. She had a deep black bruise across her face and a deep cut bleeding across her cheek. Where were they? Their surroundings finally crisped in his eyes. He jerked at his arm. They were cuffed together through a metal loop on the floor. Looking at Rey, he took a shaky breath.

Another sound broke the air: Quirin’s small, muffled cries. Anakin stood just out of arm’s reach, holding a knife to the boy’s throat. He felt dumbly for his gun and it was gone.

“Quirin, Quirin, it will be okay,” Kylo called, concentrating on the boy. “Just focus on us, okay. Listen to my voice. It won’t hurt tomorrow. Listen to me! Quirin, this is the last time!”

Anakin laughed and in one fluid motion, he harshly dragged the blade across the boy’s throat and tossed him aside, like he was nothing.

Screaming at the man, Kylo reached for Quirin’s gasping body, but he was too far. He didn’t want to pull Rey any closer. His hands shook as he felt Rey holding him back, grabbing at his arm with her free hand. He sat back, blocking Anakin from getting to her.

The blood from the boy’s slit throat spilled slowly out onto the floor. No, no, no. In the low light of the shack, Rey grabbed his shoulder as Anakin stepped back onto the wooden planks.

“I’ve made up my mind,” Kylo said, looking up to face him.

“Really now?” Anakin tilted his head. “Well, it’s a little late for him.”

“Give me one more chance. Either I stop and kill you and get this day right, or you get what you want,” he firmed his face, wiping at his eyes.

“Aren’t you going to give me a hint at what you’ve chosen?”

He shook his head, dropping to Quirin’s small body. “Tomorrow. If you don’t kill him or her before the end of the day, I will give you what you want.”

Anakin slowly took out a gun and Kylo flinched, covering Rey with his body. His grandfather just dropped it to the floor and kicked it within his reach. With a knowing smirk, he turned and left. They heard the car start and Rey waited until the sound had faded before pulling at the cuffs,
trying to get them to break through the metal on the floor.

“Kylo, we need to try to do something. To get out.”

He slowly nodded. “We have to save him, Rey. This can’t be the last day.”

Tears were streaming down her face as she looked down at the boy. She nodded, sadly. “I…I know. It…it’s not fair.”

He wiped his face, noticing his bleeding nose. “I…I can break your arm. Then we can…but…”

His voice slowly faded. *But that would be pointless, because you’d still die.* The words hung unsaid but she met his eyes with the look that meant she still heard them.

“What were you talking about, what did he mean?” Rey asked, tugging at the cuff again.

He shook his head. “That it’s my choice. He’s been trying to break the loop with Quirin and it won’t work. Now…now he’s just doing all of these things to wear me down and break me. Rey, I’m so tired. But we need one more day. I’m…I’m so sorry that you have to die again.”

He couldn’t tell her what he had decided. She had to die with hope. The wind whipped around the shed and he dropped his head. He glanced at the gun, reaching to grab it. Rey turned and met his eyes, looking from the weapon to the way his mouth was solemnly set.

“What if…what if it doesn’t reset?” She faced him, stilling her hand on his.

He closed his eyes then opened them again. No matter what he did, when he got everything right, it would never work. In his mind, all he could see was Quirin’s face, broken in fear.

“It won’t end until we kill him,” he shook his head. “Or he kills me in the way that he wants.”

“Kylo, no,” she pulled him into a hug. “We can get away, drive back to the city. There’s still time.”

He hugged her back, gripping her close, sobbing onto her shoulder. “We can’t let Quirin die.”

She reached up, desperately kissing him. He wrapped his arm around her, feeling her warmth, taking her cuffed hand in his. The strength of her body. The willingness of her mind. She never went down without a fight and here he was, asking her just to give up. He was just as bad as Anakin.

He slowly pulled away, putting his hand on her hip. “I love you. Today, tomorrow, forever.”

“I…I love you too.”

Hollow calm filled the shack. He could almost hear her heartbeat through the still air.

She shut her eyes. “He’ll be back, won’t he?”

He weakly nodded. “We were…we were so close.”

“Are you afraid you’ll wake up injured?”

He squeezed his eyes shut and shook his head. “I’m not…I’m just going to…”

The silence between them was broken when she sobbed, pressing her face into her free hand. It was a desperate, haunting cry that shattered emotions that he thought he didn’t have left to break.
She cried, resting her head on his shoulder. He let her weep, holding her midsection and resting his head on hers. He kept waiting to see headlights approach up the driveway again. It was nearly midnight. Anakin would be back soon. He always came back. This was what he wanted, Kylo slowly realised. Either he killed her or he would be back to make him watch her be tortured again.

“Let me do it,” she said, suddenly reaching for the gun. “I don’t want you to live with this.”

“I’m not…I’m not asking you to do this, I can…I can do it for you,” he held her hand, grabbing it tight. “I’d follow you if I could.”

She leaned forward, desperately kissing him again. Her mouth, her teeth, her tongue. She was alive here, now. Why couldn’t this just be forever? She was shaking, gripping his leg. The earlier hope of the day burnt him up inside, taunting him with his hubris. He tasted her tears, mixed in with her kisses.

He pressed his lips to her cheek and whispered to her. “Let me do this for you. I won’t let him take you from me.”

She rested her forehead against his. All he could hear was her quivering breaths.

“I love you,” he whispered.

She looked up with shining eyes. “I love you too. I’ve never been in love before. I can’t believe…I can’t believe that it ends like this. You need to save them, Kylo. You need to save me and stop him.”

“I will.”

She placed the gun in his hand, meeting his eyes as she sat back.

“We’ll have a tomorrow, Rey.”

He heard the rumble of a distant car, making the long way down the gravel road again. Headlights flashed outside. Rey gripped the metal ring on the floor.

“To tomorrow.”

“To tomorrow.”

Before he could regret the decision, he held the gun to her head and pulled the trigger.

He couldn’t hear his own cries over the ringing in his ears. She slumped on his lap, gone again. Blood pooled on his pants, warming his shaking legs.

Headlights filled the front of the shed. Crying, he could see the exit hole and pulled her hair over to cover it. He didn’t look up. He didn’t need to see him and hear his taunts again. He heard the car door open. He closed his eyes, wanting to turn the gun on himself. Just end it all and follow her into the dark.

He heard the floorboards creaking and didn’t react. He was focused on her.

“You will come to me, I think that you know where. You’ll have your chance to save them all. You have my word that the boy or your girl will not die. I might take them, I might hurt them. But they won’t die. I will get what I want from you,” the dark voice was dulled by the ringing in his ears. “Figure it out and we’ll have a chat and I can hear what you have on your little mind.”
He could only nod.

“Good.”

The car door closed a minute later and the engine started. He was alone again.

This was the last time she’d die. And it would be by his hand. He softly cried, looking out at the night’s sky, willing it to be morning. He was going to end this finally.

“To tomorrow,” he whispered to her. “When I let you go.”
Day 24

Chapter Summary

The final day. Read the tags for warnings, as usual.

Chapter Notes

Lovely readers, thank you SO much for all of the comments and kudos. This has really been a lot of work (to say the least: in the master document, this is 514 pages. To put it in perspective, my dissertation was 254 pages with references) and I'm almost sad to see it go. The next chapter is an epilogue and will be up at the same time as this, along with an alternate ending. More comments in the epilogue! Thanks again for following me through the loop. <3

Day 24

Breathing. He was breathing. And his heart was beating. But otherwise, he didn’t feel alive.

He’d killed her and couldn’t take that back

Kylo Ren’s eyes narrowed as he looked up at his ceiling, after shivering and jolting awake. It was the same as always, but at least it wasn’t too early. Shuddering at the thought of repeating that sort of day, he slowly examined his feelings: he was alone, empty, and cold. The lingering sensation of Rey’s head on his lap, covering his legs in her blood from the wound that he had caused ghosted across his body. He let out a long and pained sigh. The weight of the handcuff overwhelmed the distant sensation of his wedding ring. He’d caused this and earned feeling every pain and aching memory; he was the one who had killed her this time, not that awful monster. He felt remorse, and wondered if he deserved her caring and kindness today.

But this was it.

This was the final today.

His eyes finally focused on his clock radio, tempting him with its red digits. It was 5.49. Early, but not too early. He sat up, recalling beneficial things rather than agonizing over memories, pushing the dark thoughts to the growing mound at the back of his mind. Okay, the time was actually perfect.

But it had been nearly a month, a month in the goddamned loop, that he knew of. He angrily stared out the window at the same sky he’d woken up to for so many weeks.

To his core, he was exhausted. His body was sore and his shoulder was still stiff from the long-ago gunshot and stab wounds. He was almost glad that this would be over in eighteen hours in order to
forget the pain, but there was something else that brought him to a low. His heart felt heavy and broken from the end of the previous day. He emotionlessly remembered stroking her hair as she lay dead in his lap. It was the only thing that he could do. The previous day had been long, but he had all of the pieces now and could put the entire thing together and end that man’s reign of terror on him, the city, and his family.

But most of all, end what he kept doing to Rey.

She’d died so many times and in so many ways. If he had believed in souls, then he might actually wonder if she was somehow less of herself now; like the pieces of her that still lingered around him were parts of her she’d never get back. He’d used her in so many ways, tricked her into actually loving him. Her feelings were something he often put to the side, putting the case and himself first. His body, heart, and mind couldn’t take it anymore. Part of him was worried if he accidentally died one more time, then he wouldn’t wake up again. That would leave them all to an endless fate or death and dying and then forgetting, only to die again. So, there was only one thing left to do. The man’s — his grandfather’s — words still clouded his thoughts. Either listen to him and break the loop, or beat him at his own game. And he was beginning to doubt if he had the strength to do that.

Running his hand over the side of the bed, where she had laid after he had made love to her, brought bitter tears to his eyes. He rested for two more minutes before moving off his bed, running through the exact steps that they had to take and who had to do what. If anything, he could make the day right for her. It all had to be precise because he finally had all of the clues and more.

And after the previous today, he had also had enough.

He was going to give him what he wanted: himself.

Finally done wallowing, he looked around his room. Grabbing a pen and his reserve weapon from beside the bed, he went and first opened the balcony door then shifted to open his front entrance, leaning against the doorjamb with an ease he had to force.

The radio clicked on in the background, and he rolled his eyes.

“It’s Tuesday, September 24 at 6 a.m. Good morning from us at New York News 580. The temperature is 74 and partially cloudy. First, returning to top story of the missing children…”

“It will be good when I don’t have to hear that again,” he said to himself.

Approaching the door, Finn looked at him. His eyes went wide, pausing in his step. He smiled, starting to feel a little closer to normal, whatever that was; plus, happy to see that he was okay.

“Good morning. Finn, we’re on a bit of a schedule. Normally, I walk you through more of it but...yeah, it is how it is. Just listen to me and I will answer any questions that you have. This is about the child killer and I can’t solve this case without your help. You’re going to have doubts, and I don’t blame you. I know that he’s the one that gave you this note and it’s for me. It’s okay, really, but you need to make it up to me and the children, please. I need you to go to this address.”

He scribbled down quick strokes on the notepad, naming the place that he remembered from the video the previous day. Dameron had done so much good in helping him hunt down these clues.

Finn just looked at him with suspicious yet curious eyes as he continued.

“A homeless man should be waking up there around seven. He’s been visited by a strange man, who gave him directions and a bomb. Find him and then call in the bomb.” He wrote down his phone number beside the address on the note from Anakin, content to mess up his supposed clue.
“What…what the hell are you talking about?” Finn looked at the paper, then back at him. “Aren’t you even going to read the note?”

“I’ve already read it, on another today,” he shook his head, then handed him the gun. “This is going to help catch the child killer, I promise. Make sure that the rec centre is closed today, no matter what. You might need this, but I hope not. Call me on this number when you’ve done all of these things. I’ll let you know if we need more help. But in case we don’t see each other again, I want to thank you for everything you’ve done these days. You’ve trusted me, even when what I was saying sounded insane. I’ve…I’ve caused you pain too and I’m glad that you don’t remember. Just…thank you, Finn. Take care of Rey.”

Finn blinked at him, not moving, until Kylo tucked $200 in his front jacket pocket. “I can pay better than he can.”

“Is this some…what did you say about Rey?” He looked at everything he’d been handed and seemed to be absorbing the information, no matter how strange it was. There wasn’t that much time, but he had to try to convince him into trusting him again. He hated manipulating people with what they’d told him, but Anakin’s game was already in play. He had to do what he had to, no matter how it made him feel.

“Just…Finn. If you had to live one day over and over again, you’d spend it with your dying aunt. The auntie with cancer who you knew you shouldn’t leave, but still did and you regret it to this day. You’d be there. You’d do it all again and be there when she passed, not out with your friends. Is that right?”

“I…yeah.” He shook his head. His eyes were still wild but he could feel trust in the gaze. “How did you know that?”

“I just know things. Now, I don’t have much cash left, but I can give you more if it helps.” He tilted his head, trying to retrace every memory he had with the other man. He didn’t mean for this last meeting to be so rushed and he distantly hoped that he would get to see the other man again today. “Oh, one more thing…”

He reached for the paper one last time and thought for a second through his clouded mind. There it was. “Here are the lottery numbers for tonight. For the kids in the neighbourhood.”

Finn looked at the paper and just shook his head. “Are you insane? How would you know this?”

“I just do. Now, go. Please.”

“No…no, I…okay. I’ll go. I guess I’ll call you later…wait what’s your name?”

“Ben Solo.” He tapped on the envelope. “Now go, quickly. We’re losing time.”

Finn looked at him one last time before jogging off, mumbling something to himself. In a rush, Kylo remembered one final thing.

“Hey!” He called. “There’s a guard at the courthouse named Rose! You should go talk to her. Rey can introduce you!”

Finn looked at him, shook his head, then disappeared into the elevator.

Kylo nodded to himself, satisfied with how that went no matter how hurried it was. Putting himself in Finn’s shoes, he wasn’t sure if he would have trusted a strange man who handed him a gun and told him to go after someone with a bomb. But Finn was a better person than he was, in the end.
“Yeah, it’s Dameron. And it’s too early. What’d you want?”

“It’s Kylo. I need you to do a couple of things for me and I want you to listen to what I have to say before you say anything,” he paused until he heard a sound of agreement. “Your assistant has put trackers on our phones. It…it’s not really her fault. She was tricked into doing it. Just keep her there, don’t let her take any phone calls. I want you to send a patrol car to her address, where her father lives. There will be a man waiting in a stolen truck. Tell them that he has warrants out for hit and runs and to arrest him. He’s going to put up a fight, so maybe send two cars. Then, I need you to call and talk to your sister. Don’t take Elias today. Get your sister help. She doesn’t have to sell her son, no matter what her money problems are,” he slowed down. “Did you get all that?”

“That…that’s…quite a story,” he heard him cover the phone. “Bebe just dropped something expensive when I asked about her father. How the hell did you know about that? What would happen if…if you’re right and there is some nutjob after him?”

“It’s a long story. Send the patrol cars, now. Stop him.”

He heard him bark orders at her and the sounds of her protests before he started talking again.

“Done. We’ve called it in. Kylo, what the hell is going on this morning?”

“Call me Ben. The driver of the truck, Vos,” he recalled from a distant memory. “He is working with our serial killer. Get him arrested and off the street and we’ll stop a lot of deaths today.”

He gazed out the window, expecting to hear the bang of the crow hitting it.

Instead, it stood just beyond the open door, hopping on his balcony, alive and well. He smirked at it and returned to his phone call. “And your sister is really troubled. I’m so sorry for that. No one should think about giving away their child for money and drugs.”

Dameron took a long breath. “Yeah…it’s sort of messed up. I’ve tried to give her money. I’m pretty broke. But when Elias told me what she was planning…I was just going to take him and run.”

“Running…running doesn’t work. She needs help. Go and talk to her,” he said then sighed, pulling on the persistent pain he still tried to keep at a distance. “Poe, you’ve been working so hard and done so much for us. I’m glad I got to know you. You do a great job and I just took you for granted before.”

“What the hell are you talking about? Are you on drugs? Are you actually thanking me?” He heard the other man laugh at the change in his tone.

“Look, I have to call Rey. When this day is over, can you do me a big favour and make sure that she’s okay?” He glared at the balcony door and the thought of what he had to do settled in his chest, but he didn’t let it ice his tone. He sighed. “We’re going to get the child killer today and stop all of this. But I think you need to go now. We’ll be by to get Bebe to fix our phones. I might see you later.”

“This is going to be a long day, isn’t it?” Dameron replied, exhaustion in his voice.

“Yeah, but the longest day will be over soon. Talk to you soon.”

Hanging up, he let his finger hover above her number. Finally, he could make the call he’d been waiting for all morning. There were still more calls to make, but the one that meant the most to
him.

He paused, tracing her name with his eyes. He’d never bothered to change her name from Niima to anything else. Before he called, he renamed the contact.

Rey.

“Yeah, Niima?”

He thought he had been prepared, but it all came back to him. Images of her head resting limp and broken in his lap flashed before his eyes and his breath hitched at the sound of her voice. The ghosts in his apartment seemed to stir at the thought; he had to close his eyes to ignore them. Her pained screams echoed in his mind from all of the previous days. He couldn’t let that happen to her today. Getting his head together, he realized he couldn’t fall apart this time.

“Hey, it’s me.”

“Kylo? What’s wrong?

“Rey, I don’t have a lot of time to talk. Just come here. I’ll text you the address. I need you.”

“I…sure. See you soon.”

He hung up, sent her the address and then strode up to the balcony door to stare at the tiny black form that was apparently waiting for him. The crow squawked, opened its wings and fluffed its feathers at him. There was something calming and reassuring about the bird: The way it moved its head and stared at him with his ancient eyes brought him towards peace. He took a step back and the crow flew in, landing on the back of his sofa. Its black beak glistened in the morning light. He blinked at the bird, wondering if this was the proper way to say goodbye to the small creature. There was something in the way that the crow looked at him that made his earlier guilt ebb. There were good things he could do today; he’d already done one.

Rey wanted to be cared about, and he could give her that. Just for one day.

“Well?” He looked at the crow. “I finally saved you. What do you have to say for yourself?”

The bird hopped towards him and squawked again, quirking its head. It was like he was daring him not to carry out what he was set on doing. Or maybe it was just a stupid bird.

He narrowed his eyes and took a step forward. He bird hopped back, dipping its head. It bowed slightly, staring at him with its beady, knowing eyes. The air hung still in the city that never sleeps, slowing around him in a rush of wind. The crow squeaked lightly, then it flew off again.

“Well, goodbye to you too!”

He glared at the balcony door as he shut it then grabbed the chair to put by the door for her bag. At this point, he would give anything to just drink the day away in bed. To lurk anonymously at an aquarium. To rest at the park, or on the beach. To be passed out on a train to Albany. But he had to get everything in order for later.

He heard her footsteps in the hallway and her soft knock on the open door. He turned to watch her come into his apartment and felt the sight of her shake his lingering doubts about the day. Her ghosts would be at rest when he saved her today. He brought her inside, hand lightly brushing her bare back, and closed and locked the door.
“What’s going on?”

“Get changed, and I’ll explain it all to you. I need to call my mother and uncle right now. It shouldn’t take long. They have something I need,” he reached out to touch her shoulder, craving the contact. It was warm and delicate, bringing him back to the first day when this all started. “We have a lot of work to do today, but we’re going to get the man who’s hurting the children.”

She looked at him with surprise in her eyes. “Kylo, what are you talking about?”

He checked his watch. “Okay, first I need you to call in the next drop. A man named Hux is going to drop the Windu girl around 7:55. Its not far from here, at a cafe. Instruct them to come in unmarked cars at exactly that time and not to let him get away. If we don’t get him there, we’ll lose our advantage. And I don’t want to beat the hell out of him today. That really upset you.”

He was getting ahead of himself because she took a slow step back from him.

“It will be okay, Rey,” he moved to the kitchen to write down the address and hand it to her. “Just trust me.”

“You’re my partner…I have to trust you,” she slowly nodded and he grinned at her. She gave him a small smile in return, pulling out her phone.

He avoided the call to his mother for the time being, trying to remember the subway station and time that Maul would be there. He hummed to himself when he recalled it as he made an identical call, just as Rey was doing across his living room. He wanted to make her realize that they could work well together. She needed to not feel like a failure who wanted to give up on her partner. He was the one that had let her down. But most of all, she couldn’t feel alone.

They hung up, almost in tandem and he turned and smiled brightly at her. She looked happy but also shook her head at the look.

“What’s wrong with you?” She asked. “You never smile.”

“It’s just…today,” he studied her up and down, remembering how she looked at the end of every other day and replacing those images with the living, breathing woman across the room from him. The worn shoes, the curve of her ponytail. The ragged state of her backpack. She’d been putting on those clothes for an average day, not expecting to stumble into this web. “Look, we have to go to the courthouse to talk to the DA and ADA Holdo at some point, but first I need to call my mom. Get changed. I promise that everything will be clear soon.”

She returned his look with a small, curious smile. “I…okay. You better explain everything to me, because none of this is making sense.”

“It will, soon,” he was already dialing the phone as she went to his bedroom. He stepped out onto the balcony, expecting the crow to return to mock him again.

His mother answered and he could start this part of the day. He needed that chest.

“Ben, what is it?”

“Mom, put me on speaker phone so Uncle Luke can hear too,” he drummed his fingers on the railing. There was something almost liberating about knowing how the day would end at this point. He could make sure they were all safe and lead them to the truth.

“How did you know that he’s here? We’re driving to the airport. It takes so long. Did you know
they changed the exit ramp again? Luke’s going to China for some thing that I don’t understand, something about a tree?” She sounded confused, descending down into her clouded thoughts. How long had he just left her alone, in that apartment? She would not always be there, he thought with dawning anguish. He had to see her to say goodbye. Still, in the background, she was rambling. “Here, Luke, do the speaker thing. I don’t know how this phone works.”

“Ben? What’s wrong?” His uncle sounded concerned. It would be good to see them both today.

“Look, I don’t have a lot of time. I need you both to get your mother’s chest and bring it to me in the city. There are some things in there that I need to help solve this case with the child killer,” he tried to keep his voice from speeding up, but he also needed them to act and not just think everything into the ground. They were always wasting time, grinding memories into dust.

“Why would you need that?” His mother asked, the hollow speed of the car echoing in the background of her familiar voice.

“Mom, Luke,” he sighed, gathering his words in a hasty attempt to get his family to him, “The man who you think is your father in the nursing home is really named Owen Lars. He’s…he’s your father’s half-brother. Anakin did that to him, and let you find him. He’s the one killing these children and he’s after me and my partner.”

He heard them both talk over one another as they let the moment sink in.

“Are you sure, Ben? How do you know all of this?” His mother asked, before he heard the indicator start to click. She was turning around.

“I know this because I’ve met him. He’s been hunting me since day one. I’ve been stuck in the same day for nearly a month, living it over and over again. It’s probably been for longer, I don’t know, but you have to trust me and listen. He’s done all of this to get back at Ben Kenobi and Sheev Palpatine for causing the accident that hurt his wife,” he resisted turning when he heard the balcony door open and Rey stepped beside him. She didn’t touch him this time, but he could wait for that. There was always a part of him that was drawn to her, no matter how much he hated himself for the things that had happened to her. This Rey would live. He would make sure of that.

“How do you know Ben Kenobi? We haven’t spoken in years. And what do you think is in that chest?” Luke asked.

“Something that we can use to convince them that they were there. He’s made them forget,” he looked at his partner and offered her a small nod. She returned the look, but tilted her head to eye him. “Mom, there’s something else.”

“What Ben? All of this is…this sounds very strange.”

“I’m sorry, I know,” he winced. “Mom, he’s the one that killed dad.”

The other end of the phone was silent.


“Yes, absolutely,” he replied, letting his shoulders sag. He shouldn’t have told her over the phone. “Look, just get the chest and bring it to my apartment. But be careful. He might be looking for you too. Take another car or taxi and don’t use your credit cards.”

“I…okay…it will take a few hours,” Leia replied, her voice shaky.
“It’s fine, mom. Just call me when you get here. You can meet Rey too,” he said. “I’ve got to go. We have a busy day ahead of us. Please be careful.”

He hung up and turned to her.

“What was that all about?” She asked. “Who killed your father?”

He looked away, over the city. “The man who’s murdering the children.”

She stepped closer, touching his arm. “I’m so sorry. When did you find out?”

“Just recently,” he looked at her hand. “But maybe I’ve known all along. He left a note for me this morning. He’s been taunting us with this case, making it personal for me. I’m going to tell you some things today that will sound strange at first, but I really hope that you can believe me. There’s something about today, and about you, that have made me a different person.”

Her hand stilled on his. “You’ve never…talked to me like this before. Kylo, what’s happening?

He reached and took her hand, bringing it to his mouth to kiss it. She let him, but looked concerned, eyes glistening in the dawn he’d deemed he’d never feel again. “It’s about this day, Rey, and how we’re going to stop a madman.”

He guided her hand to his hip. She didn’t step away when he put his hands on hers. There was something about being close to her that made the world both brighter and grey out. There were so many things that he didn’t know about her, and he hoped that he would have time today. That would help solidify what he was losing and what he was setting free.

“Why are you looking at me like this?” She tilted her head. “What’s going on?”

He had one last day with her. There were so many things that he wanted to do with her, and they had so little time. He studied her face; her dimples, her freckles, her eyes, her lips. He reached up to smooth one of her eyebrows and she looked perplexed at the gesture.

“There’s so much I want to say to you, and I’m having trouble finding the words,” he cupped her face. “Can I just tell you how beautiful you are in the morning?”

She rested her head in his hand, accepting the touch and his gentle tone. “I haven’t showered. My hair’s a mess.”

“No, you’re perfect,” he wanted to kiss her then, but let his hands drop and he stepped away. He couldn’t push her right away. “Come…come inside. I have to tell you everything.”

She followed him, looking more puzzled at the sudden withdrawal of his touch. He hoped that he could make it up to her.

“Sit down,” he gestured at the couch. “We don’t have a lot of time, but I need to tell you what’s happening.”

“Okay,” she narrowed her eyes.

“What if I were to tell you that you’ve already lived through today. Twenty-four times,” he slowly said, sitting down beside her.

“I’d say that…”

He remembered the third day, or maybe the second.
“There is only one today Kylo…and you drink too much.” He matched her word for word again.

She sat up a little straighter. “How did you do that?”

“Rey, I’m living the same day, over and over again,” he started to explain. “It’s nothing normal. It’s what connects me to the killer: he’s my grandfather, Anakin Skywalker. We have this genetic disorder that binds me to him, and the children. He’s been using them from the start, to start the time loop. He lives through the same day until he finally wears them down and he can kill them. Then he moves on to the next one.”

“So,” she said, still sounding slightly stunned, “So, the bodies that we’ve found, that’s not the first time that they died?”

“Yes!” He exclaimed, pleased at how quickly she was following his admittedly twisted story. She was smarter than he was, after all. “He’s been using them to get at the DA, Palpatine, and the man running against him, Kenobi. He wants to destroy their careers out of revenge for something that happened a long time ago. He’s made them forget by looping the day. You say something to someone often enough, they eventually believe it when you…when you know what to say.”

His joy at her reaction faded, replaced by the knowledge that he was using the same thing on her. He shook his head. Her feelings were real, he told himself. She was attracted to him before the loop. He wasn’t just manipulating her to get what he wanted.

“What did they do?” She asked, reaching for his hand again. She could see the sudden reaction in his face.

“He thinks that they caused an accident that killed my grandmother in the end. That’s why my mother and uncle are coming; they have a chest that has her old papers. There’s a picture in there that I’m sure will convince them that they were there, and that they knew him and her…and each other. I’m hoping that it will make them remember,” he said, trying to get back into the day and the moment. He had to leave her with good memories. He couldn’t dwell on what had happened.

“So, why today? Why are you living the same day?” She asked. “If that’s really what’s happening.”

She was there, but not convinced. He frowned, remembering the previous today and started unbuttoning his shirt. She slid away for a moment, then saw the scars that he revealed. They were the same strange scars that were fading, but still there. She reached out to run her hand on his shoulder, curiosity taking over.

“I’ve…I saw you change on Friday,” she shook her head. “You didn’t have these then. And it looks old. Kylo, what’s happening?”

“It’s from when I was shot,” he pointed. He gestured to another spot, after removing his shirt. “This is where I was stabbed.” He lifted his chin. “Do you see this?”

Her fingers traced across his Adam’s apple and inhaled, shakily. “What happened to you?”

“I’ve…I’ve died. On other days. But I can’t die by accident or kill myself anymore,” he quickly added. She pursed her lips at the remark and sat closer. “The thing is, Rey, you…you die too.”

She sat up straighter, her brown eyes searching his to see if it was the truth. He could only meet her gaze with a light nod. She finally shook her head for him to continue, before looking out the window to contemplate his words. He softened his tone, moving closer to her to put a cautious hand on her leg. She switched from the window to his hand and offered him a hint of a smile.
“For the last twenty-four todays, I’ve either watched you die or you’ve died alone. It’s been…the days have been so hard. I haven’t really kept it all together,” he drifted off, into memory. “Seeing you die all of the time, getting brutally injured and being in such pain, it hurts every time. I sometimes don’t think I can feel anything anymore, but I still do. I don’t have many more days left. I need your help today to save the last boy and track this monster down and kill him. It’s the only way to end the loop. We were in it before he realized it. I think that he brought me into it after he memorized our day and our actions with the case. Since then, we’ve just been playing catch up. We must have died over and over again in different ways before I even realized what was going on.”

“So, I’ve died how many times?” She asked, still letting the information wash over her.


She looked at him with wide eyes again. “And how many times have we had this conversation?”

“About the same amount of times that you’ve died,” he replied.

“And did I believe you each time?”

He paused, considering her words. He looked very patient for a man who had had the same conversation so many times before. “The only time that it was hard to convince you was the first time it happened.”

“Well,” she said as she stood. “Let’s not waste any time. Today feels like a good day not to die.”

He smiled at her, tucking a hair behind her ear to stand beside her. She didn’t flinch at the sudden contact, but instead tilted her head at him. Her eyes were bright brown, shining up at him. He could get lost in them.

“What?”

“You amaze me,” he smirked, shifting his hand to cup her face again. “Every day, you just are...you. This is going to sound like it’s coming out of nowhere, but I never get tired of telling you this. You are beautiful, caring, smart and the best partner I’ve ever had. I want to show you that I can be a good partner, and not just the jerk that you remember from yesterday. Rey, I love you. It’s the realest feeling that I’ve ever had and gets me through today every time.”

“Really?” She asked. “I didn’t think Kylo Ren was anything except mad all of the time.”

“Ben.”

“What?”

“Call me Ben. My name is Ben Solo,” he studied her determined eyes. “I think that I’m done with being Kylo Ren.”

“Okay, Ben,” she nodded, testing out the name. “Tell me what we need to do to get this man and end this day.”

Hearing her say his name made it impossible to resist her. He bent down to kiss her and she leaned into it, resting her hand on his bare chest. She had been so alone and now he was kissing her, telling her that he loved her. He wanted to feel guilty as she nudged him down to the couch and climbed onto his lap to deepen the kiss, but all he felt was her. The light touches, taking off his shirt, the kind words: he had been seducing her without know it.
He gently broke the kiss, his mind coming back to him. “I know you, Rey. We’ve had so many days together, both good and bad. The good days are the ones I want to remember, but the bad ones haunt me. I...I know how alone you’ve felt, even with all of the friends that you have. I’ve met so many of them, Maz, Yoda, Jessika, Rose, Finn, and they are good people. They’re strange, but nice. But I hate how I treated you before I realized how wonderful you are.”

“How are you doing this? Making it all...seem to feel better?” She looked down at him with trust that he didn’t deserve. But holding her close, knowing what she needed, he had to get over his guilt. Maybe she could help him see this day through to a good end.

He brushed the back of her neck, knowing how sensitive she was there. She shuddered at the touch. “I know so much about you, and you don’t remember anything about me. I know you love the beach, and that you hate math. You like sugar in your tea and good coffee. You wear your hair down when you’re in a good mood. You wanted to be a cop because your great aunt was hurt in a robbery. You’re detailed and focused, but still hate making mistakes. You hate it when I don’t eat. I know you love the back of your neck kissed and that you’re wearing blue panties and a white bra right now. And you have a small mole here. I’m sorry that you don’t know anything about me, but talking to you and telling you things makes me feel real, and that this day will eventually end.”

She blushed at his comments, settling onto his lap. “So...you know how I feel?”

He kissed her jawline, lightly shifting his hips. “And how you taste. All of it.”

“Ky...Ben,” she closed her eyes at the sensation. “So this is really happening? How else would you know these things? And have these scars?”

“Yes,” he felt her gently grind against his growing erection. Having the pressure of her on his lap made him want to take her right there. Would they have time? If everything went as planned, they would. He needed his mother and Luke to get there and it would probably take them another three hours. He couldn’t talk to Kenobi or the DA without that. The last part of initial plan was to stop Holdo. If everyone else did their job — which he doubted would work perfectly, but still hoped it would — then the accomplices would be shut down and Anakin would be frustrated. He’d have to talk to Quirin and tell him the plan. That part would be hard.

Once again his need was taking over, but she was also there, getting something that she also needed.

She started kissing up his neck and he was nearly lost. Her hands moved up his chest, testing where she could touch him. The day was in motion; he wanted her right then. There might not be time later. He had to give her the best memory of him. He could do that for her.

Her mouth returned to his and he started to unbutton her shirt. But he slowed his hand, feeling his fingers grow numb, like the distant memories of being shot.

“What?” She broke the kiss. “Why did you stop?”

“Why...why was this so easy for you?” He asked, remembering the previous times she had so effortlessly let him touch and love her. It was a question that he needed an answer; maybe it was all part of him manipulating her.

“It’s easy because,” she slowly rolled her hips against him and he blinked his eyes shut, letting her settle onto his lap. “I...I’m attracted to you. What you’re saying right now, how you’re talking to me, it makes it all seem real. If it’s real for you, maybe I want to be there too: to be in this day with you. You are...so handsome and strong and just...the way that you can look at someone and seem
to see through them: a suspect, a witness. It’s both intimidating and striking. Just…your hair, your eyes, your arms…I had a crush on you. I guess it didn’t go away, even when you treated me like you did.”

He gradually began to upon her shirt again, revealing the familiar bra. “I regret all of that. You were doing your best, and I was just angry and too focused. I hate myself for how I treated you and the others. You’ve made me a better person, even though I feel like I don’t deserve you.”

“Why…why would you not deserve someone caring about you?” She asked, shifting to help him slip her shirt off her shoulders. “Ben, you…you’ve always looked so lonely and mad. You come into work, you never really talk to anyone. You glare at the people trying to help you and snap at me when I ask simple questions. I’ve been worried about you with this case, but I was almost ready to give up on ever being able to really work with you. I’m new at this and need someone to show me what to do, how to act.”

He moved his hands from her hips to cup her breasts and she sighed at the feeling. This was a conversation that they had half-had before, but he needed to finish it.

“I know,” he pulled her closer to kiss her collarbone. “Rey, I’m…I know you just remember yesterday, but that’s not me anymore. You’ve helped me not to be so angry and too actually see the people around me. You’ll see, over the day, how well we work together. And how we fit together.”

She arched towards him, running her hands through his hair. “I believe you. I don’t know why, but I do.”

They locked eyes and her breathing briefly increased when he reached to undo her bra clasp and quickly let go. She leaned back, holding it briefly to her chest. He met her eyes, moving from the fabric to her face. She bit her lip; she was embarrassed and he settled his hands on her hips. How could he make her feel as he saw her and not take things too quickly? That part was hard.

“You’ve had sex with me before?” She said, more of a statement than a question. “I can’t even remember the last time I had sex and you do. Or think you do. Or whatever is happening.”

“It’s always beautiful, Rey,” he caressed her ribs, daring to touch her again, to break the tension. “You’re so unbelievable, every time. I just…I love being inside you and feeling all of you. Your body is beautiful and I can’t stop touching you. I always want you, every day, and it’s hard not to push it.”

“Like what’s happening right now?” She said, taking the words from his mouth. Still, she let her bra fall away.

“It’s not a bad thing,” he whispered. She was warm under his hands as he caressed up her side, brushing to her breasts. He briefly touched her rose-shaded nipples and sighed before he reached her face and touched her lips. She kissed his hand and brought her hand up to bring his closer to suck gently on his on the tips of his fingers. “You turn me on.”

“Yeah?” She smirked, kissing the palm of his hand. “I can feel that.”

Looking at her in the morning light, he felt like changing his mind. Could he really leave her? When she tilted her head into his hand, he could almost feel the ghost exit wound and had to close his eyes.

“What? What did I do?”

“Nothing,” he blinked his eyes open and leaned forward to kiss her again, trying to return to the
moment. She was half naked, on his lap. This was the beginning of the end and he wanted it to start off right. He put his hands on her ass and nudged her closer. “I need you, in so many ways.”

She slowly shifted off of him and he briefly sighed at the lack of contact until she reached for both of his hands to pull him from the couch. She pulled him into a gentle hug and he exhaled at having her like this again.

Rey tilted her head. “Have the days really been this bad?”

She was looking at his scars again and he had to nod. “But they’ve also been good. I’ve had you.”

“If…if this is really happening, did I tell you about what happened to me and my aunt?” She asked, carefully testing him.

His eyes fell and he nodded. He couldn’t mention the other time; it still filled him with rage that he was helpless at the situation. He kissed her cheek and hugged her again.

“You told me how you were attacked and…raped,” he whispered against her. “And I don’t want you ever to think that I’m demanding anything from you. It’s hard for me not to touch and kiss you. For me, it’s familiar. For you, it’s always new.”

“Kylo…” she started before he raised a playful eyebrow. “Ben, I…I know what I’m doing right now. This case has been so stressful, and working with you has been hard. But the way you’re looking at me, touching me, and what you’re saying to me, I feel wanted. And beautiful. And if you think that we have time, I’d very much to have sex with you right now.”

“I want you,” he said, returning to kissing her, gently guiding her backwards. “I think you’re beautiful. I love you, your mind and your body. And I want that too.”

She let him lead her, undoing her pants as they went, sliding them off in his kitchen. He followed her, feeling the eyes of phantoms around them. Soon they’d be at peace, but right now, this Rey needed him.

His buzzing phone interrupted them from the kitchen table. He nudged her on towards the bedroom as he answered.

“Yeah?”

“Ren?” It was Mundi. “We…how the hell did you know? We’ve got the guy trying to drop the girl. He’s not talking. But we’ve got him. How did you know where the drop would be?”

Poe’s words echoed in his mind. “I got a tip, anonymous. Look, we’re in the middle of…something. Let me know about the other lead, the German assassin. We called that in earlier too. We’ll be in later.”

He hung up, checking his texts as he pulled off his boxers. Poe had tried calling, but then left a text. Things were better with his sister, but not perfect. He was still talking to her, but had heard from his assistant. Her father was fine and the man was in custody. Finn had texted that the man had been there, with the bomb and was drunk so it was easy to call it in. They were off the table. It was only waiting until Maul left the subway station, soon, and then Anakin would be shut down. Holdo was a wildcard, but she was busy running around with the DA. He could get to her when he was feeling more complete.

She was naked when he entered the bedroom, waiting for him on his bed. Her body was golden and toned and everything that he had ever wanted.
“What was that?”

“They got the first three,” he said, moving to lay down beside her. “One more to go. Plus, that idiot Holdo.”

He started to kiss her again, feeling up her side. The shape of her hips, the dip of her waist, up to her ribs and towards her breasts. His hand shifted directions and she sighed.

“Holdo?” She started to shudder as he caressed down her body, kissing up her neck at the same time.

“We need to talk to her, that’s all. She poisoned us one day and shot us on another day,” he sucked gently on earlobe. “We’ll take care of it, don’t worry.”

His hand found her warmth and she arched towards him. He slipped his fingers into her and she sighed. He shifted his fingers, finding her clit. He moved his thumb in careful and focused circles.

“I’m…I’m sure we will. God, Ben.”

He kissed her, taking in how much she wanted him. The way that she was moving and the way her hips were rolling; she had no doubts.

She rolled on top of him and he accepted the movement. Grinding against his cock, she met his mouth and started moving against him, slowly and with focus. He felt how wet she was and still couldn’t believe she wanted him again. He was broken and damaged and she was whole and perfect. She leaned back, arching up to look down at him. She ran her hands through his hair and he could only look up at her and everything that made her perfect to him.

Meeting his eyes, she smirked, running her hands down his chest and start the move down his body, sliding her hands down his sides. She reached his hips then was kneeling between his legs, her mouth near his cock.

“What can I do this for you?”

“Yes, Rey, yes, just…come here. Let me do it for you too,” he tried to ignore how good it felt for her to run her tongue along his length.

She stopped to lick her lips. “I’ve never…I…”

“It’s okay. Come here.”

She nervously shifted her body until he had her heat in his face. He gently licked her and felt her mouth around his shaft and let himself be lost in the extra sensation. Her mouth was warm and firm and he found her pleasure spot and she shuddered, her motions faltering before finding her rhythm again. There was nothing in the world other than this.

Rising up, she gasped, rapidly shifting to be by his side again, spreading her legs. “Please, Ben, now.”

He was still catching up with her, but leaned forward to kiss her, tasting himself on her lips. He grabbed a pillow and tucked it under her lower back and she looked at him with hooded eyes. For her, something like eight hours ago they were strangers, locked in a strained partnership. Now, he was slowly entering her warmth. He braced himself around her as her legs wrapped around his back and he heard her moan as he was fully in her: always so sensitive and beautiful.

He shifted her legs so he could lean down to kiss her and thrust into her at the same time. Her
mouth was open and ready, and she was bucking against him, wanting to quicken the pace. He wanted her to feel everything, but she was making it difficult not to lose it all at that point.

“I love you,” he whispered. “I love you so much.”

“God, Ben,” she groaned. “Never stop this. Don’t stop.”

The sounds and sensations, everything that was her making love, made the heaviness in his lower body start to be too much. He kissed her slowly, thrusting again.

He was lost in the moment: her lips against his and his skin. His hair in her hands. How their bodies fit together. He had flashes of being with her in the future, holding their child. Kissing her on a real wedding day, their son between them. His mother crying, his uncle looking proud. If he chose otherwise, that could be his future with her. Or this could be her future with someone else. He focused on that. They were together now and she could move on.

“I’m so close,” he whispered. “You...you’re too good.”

She bit her lip. “This...I...yes.”

She shifted in a certain way and he knew he was about to come. He couldn’t hold back any longer. Her on the couch. Her in the crash room. Her in her bed. Her in his bed. Her just now. Her taste, her touch. All of the days were crashing around him as he felt his orgasm building to the point of breaking.

“I’m...”

“Yes!”

He came, blissling out for the few seconds as his want rolled over him. He buried his head into his shoulder and felt her grip his back. She slowed her hands into gentle circles as he laid down beside her, still in her. She kept her legs steady, starting to kiss him again as he felt a sob threatening to rise in his chest. He couldn’t stop it, and he pulled her closer, resting his head against her shoulder.

“Shh, shh, what is it?” She shifted away and he felt incomplete when he left her. “Ben, it’s okay. I’m here.”

He pulled her closer, not able to stop the words from leaving him.

“It’s not fair,” he whispered into her hair. “None of this is fair. The kids shouldn’t be dead. You shouldn’t have died. I’m worried that no matter what we do, this day will never end.”

She stroked his hair, resting beside him, meeting his eyes. “It’s okay. You just said that we’re ahead of him. We’ll do this, okay?”

He let her hold him, letting tears fall onto her skin. He kept trying to think about how she felt. Having a man who had been cold and mean to her for so long suddenly grab and kiss her must have felt strange. Having him fuck her and then start crying must have been even stranger than his entire story about living the same day over and over again. How could she put up with him?

Finally, he started to feel more like himself and leaned back. He kissed her again.

“Thank you.”

She tilted her head. “For what?”
“For being you,” he ran his hand down her hip, taking in the gift before him like it was the last time. Because it was. “For helping me, every day.”

She nodded. “I always want to help you. I’m glad you finally let me.”

He glanced at the clock and she followed his eyes. They should know about Maul soon enough. And they had to get to Holdo, and talk to the Jinns. His family was still on their way. Placing a kiss on her nose, he sighed.

“I’m sorry I missed all of this before.”

She slowly shifted away from him. “Can I shower?”

“Yeah, I’m going to check my phone and then join you.”

Looking at him playfully over her shoulder as she walked to the washroom, she winked. He looked forward to it.

Checking his messages, he closed his eyes at Mundi’s annoyed tones about the other man they had in custody. They had Maul now, as well as Vos. He mentioned the random homeless bomber and he could visualize the man throwing up his hands. His mother had also called, leaving a message about some road stop they had found and if he wanted anything. Fried chicken? A postcard? What would he even need there? God, mom. He’d have to call her back, Mundi as well. But now, he was going to shower with the woman he loved.

He opened the door to the wall of steam.

“You always shower too hot,” he called, letting her know he was there.

“Quiet, it’s nice,” she laughed as he slipped behind the shower curtain. “You…I can’t believe how wonderful that was.”

She hugged him under the running water and he kissed her again. “They have the last one. We’re good. The morning is starting to get away from us. We have time to head to the courthouse before mom and Luke get here.”

Wrapping her arms around his neck, she smiled at him. “So, I’m going to meet your family?”

“Yes,” he ran his hand through her damp hair. “I…can I say that we’re together?”

“I’ve never met anyone’s family before,” she let him massage her scalp. “I think I’d like that.”

He remembered having her in the shower and if they weren’t on the clock, he wished he could relive it. She kept looking at his scars and kissing them, looking at him with soft eyes. He was almost ready for the day. The good feelings of the morning would help lift him over the dark thoughts that lurked at his mind. He’d also shown her his softer side, and how harsh the days had been. They finished showering after more gentle and warm kisses, and he still was torn between what he needed to do and what he had to do.

When he was away from her, changing in his room while she checked her phone and went through her bag, he kept lapsing back into his thoughts. Today was for her. She needed to see him be at his best, but also that he was a person. She wasn’t afraid of his weaknesses. He ran through his mind at what he had read about the previous day and checked the clock. There would be one stop before the courthouse. Maybe she’d enjoy playing hero.
She entered his room already dressed in something that he'd never seen before when he was still deciding what to wear, only standing in a dark pair of slacks.

“How many outfits do you have in that bag?” He asked as he picked up another shirt. No, it still wasn’t right.

She reached for one shirt, a deep purple, and handed it to him. “This. Wear this. I love this shirt.”

He took it from her and gave her a soft look. “I love you, no matter what you wear.”

She grinned. “This…you’re another person.”

“Well,” he said, slipping on the shirt. “I’m Ben now.”

“Yes,” she rubbed his back, looking at them both in the mirror. “You’re…I can’t wait to learn about who you are.”

He straightened his shoulders, searching his eyes. The hint of yellow at the edges of his eyes nearly sent him into a panic so he focused on her instead. Rather than the light outfit she usually wore, these were dark trousers and a shorter suit jacket. He could see the outline of her holster under her arm. This was their job. He needed to stop delaying leaving his home for the last time.

“You will,” he quickly kissed her, moving to put on his holster. “Can you grab the charcoal jacket?”

She took the wrong one but he wore it anyway. He dreaded the task that would be left for whoever had to clean out his closet.

Looking at himself in the mirror he started to make peace with the day. He wasn’t just out to help his own cause, but more people as well. There were still hints of yellow at the corners of his eyes that made him shake his head and turn away.

“So,” he said, clearing his throat. “I…we have everything else taken care of, except for Holdo. I want to do more good.”

“What do you mean?”

He checked his watch again. “There…there’s going to be an attempted bank robbery a few blocks from here in fifteen minutes. He shoots three people, including a pregnant woman. He fled the scene. Let’s go stop it.”

She smiled at him, showing off her dimples. “It sounds…like a plan.”

He grabbed his phone, knowing that Anakin would be thrown off by their erratic movements, going places they’d never been, and still were not connected to him. But he could still stop something bad from happening.

In the quick cab ride over, he called the Jinns. Kristina again accepted his story, but he assured her that they would be by soon to talk to her son. Rey listened to every word but he gave her a look that meant that they would talk about it later. She gave him a small nod, enjoying being his partner for the first time.

They entered the corner bank before the man was supposed to get there. He motioned to Rey to get into another line than him and to follow his moves. She fell into his tempo, glancing through her phone and looking annoyed at the line. There were three queues and they finally heard the man
enter the bank with a rattle to shake his weapon in the air.

“Get down! This is a robbery!”

He looked at Rey and she nodded as they hit the floor. The man, in a half, lazy, mask walked up to the counter. This is where it went wrong, he remembered. This is where he could get it right. Rising silently, he moved behind the man who had his weapon pointed at the poor bank teller.

“You need to stop, and give me your gun, right now,” he said, pressing his gun against the man’s back. “I’m NYPD and I will shoot you if you don’t give it to me.”

The young man tensed, and the cashier dropped.

“What the hell…?” He looked over and saw Rey’s gun in his face. “What…?”

Kylo quickly looked at the bank security guard and nodded, telling him to cuff the man as he dropped to his knees.

“How did you…?” The other man started.

“Just a coincidence,” he answered. Nodding at the guard again, he winked. “We have to run. Call it in.”

He guided Rey from the building, feeling calm roll over him. Like with the crow, he’d never done this before. They’d stopped this part, not connected to the case. This was a bonus. He was going to make this day better for as many people as he could. He glanced over and smirked at her.

She roughly kissed him as the cab rolled up, surprising him. “This really is something you’ve lived through before.”

“Not really this part, but you’ve helped me,” he said, honestly, opening the door to help her inside. “This is all because of you.”

Heading to the courthouse, he let her play with his hand and grin at him. He still saw how she shone from the energy of both the takedown and their earlier lovemaking. He fed off of her energy.

“You…where have you been all of this time?”

“Maybe I was waiting for you?” He kissed the back of her hand.

She blushed. “So what do we do now?”

He sat up straighter, trying to get back into the tone of the day, but not ready yet. “We have so much to do…”

He trailed off and she squeezed his hand. “You’re not rushing me. I promise.”

After meeting her eyes, he nodded. “Once we get to the courthouse, you tell Rose that they need more security, because he’s out to hurt everyone still, I think. And I go up and talk to Holdo. We can wait to talk to Palpatine until Leia and Luke get here. Maybe we should talk to him and Kenobi together.”

“That’s a good idea,” she nodded. “Then back to the house?”

“Maybe Quirin first.” He shook his head. “We need to make sure that they are okay.”

Holding her hand made him feel better. His breathing was level and she was there, not doubting
him. By the time that they arrived, he was more certain about the steps that he had never done, but was willing to do over the day if it came to that. If a few people could be better off, he’d be able to let this day go.

Rey held his hand up the courthouse steps and he couldn’t help but smile at her. “You’re a good cop.”

She dipped her head. “That…that was all you.”

“You see now? We’re good partners,” he tilted her chin. “I’m sorry I didn’t see that before.”

“You see it now. That’s what matters.”

He kissed her cheek before they entered and parted. He felt almost no fear leaving her alone to go up to Holdo’s office. Rose would take care of her. He needed to thank her before they left, and maybe remind her about the paperboy whom she had never met in this today.

Holdo looked more exhausted than usual when he knocked on her open door and invited himself in.

“You can guess why I’m here?” He said, sitting down. Mockingly, he folded one knee over the other. Might as well take a moment to celebrate himself.

“Enlighten me, detective. It’s been a stressful morning.”

“Because of your contact? Telling you to kill me?”

She went pale, her purple hair swaying as she heavily sat down.

“Listen to me, Amilyn, he’s only out for himself. What you’ve done can’t be fixed, but you can repair some of the damage. You can stop taking his calls. You can talk to your boss. But don’t let him know that we’re on to him. I know that you’ve been under a lot of pressure, and that he’s been adding to that, but that does not excuse your actions. But make this right today.” He looked at her harshly, but still registered the tears at the corners of her eyes.

“I can’t…I can’t make any excuses…”

“No, you can’t,” he missed Rey by his side. “We will be back to talk to your boss. We hope that when we get back, you will have told him everything that you know. And if you call Skywalker, I swear, I will put a bullet in your head.”

He left the room, avoiding her pleas to jog down the stairs to Rey. She was still talking to Rose and he waved at the other woman who looked at him with confusion.

“Rose, this is…Ben…he’s my…”

“We’re together,” he offered. “Nice to meet you. Look, ADA Holdo is about to freak out or leave. You need to stop her.”

Rose looked at him with interested but still wary eyes. “I still don’t like how there’s a threat against the DA. But I can get extra security.”

“That’s all we need,” he took Rey’s hand. “We have to go back to the station, but we’ll call you later, okay?”

Rose looked around her small office and nodded. “It’s okay. Rey told me. I can do this.”
He smiled lightly at them both. All of these encounters felt rushed; he realized he was getting bored with the routine and took a deep breath, studying the room. Be here, now.

“I’m sorry,” he muttered, rubbing his eyes. “I’m making a mess of this.”

Rey slowly moved to his side, to touch his back. “No, you’re not. It’s part of the case, we’re okay. Right, Rose?”

The other woman nodded. “It’s fine. We have to take these things seriously. I know Rey and if she trusts you, then I do too.”

Shaking his head, he tried to stand with more confidence. “Just tell us if Holdo goes anywhere.”

Rey stroked his back, still reading his tension, but eventually turned to nod at her friend. Rose stared at him with lingering suspicion, trying to figure out his changing moods. She finally gave him a firm look of agreement and he accepted it. He checked his watch; there was another place they should be. It was something looked forward to, but also dreaded. If Anakin wanted him, he’d have to keep his word. He had to talk to Quirin and tell him that he was going to be taken. It sat like a stone in his stomach, but he had to set up that part of the day. He was being torn in so many directions that he couldn’t keep his emotions straight.

“Rey, we need to go,” he took her hand, wanting to feel grounded again. “Sorry, Rose. Let us know what happens. Thank for all of your help. You’ve always done things without asking for anything in return. You’re a good friend to Rey.”

She narrowed her eyes at him, but finally shook her head. “It’s…it’s not a problem. It’s part of my job to take threats seriously.”

Rey gave him a confused look as they left the courthouse. She wasn’t going to like the idea of letting Quirin just giving himself over to that madman, but he’d have to convince her that it was the right thing to do. He was starting to feel disconnected from the events, letting himself drift. Even talking to Holdo had felt to routine.

“What was that about?”

“I just wanted to thank her, that’s all,” he shrugged, flagging down a cab. “It’s been a long day and she’s reliable.”

He felt near panic as the cab arrived. He froze at the door, staring at it. Quirin was going to be taken. Anakin was going to hurt him. Rey was going to die. He’d set it all up. He’d already killed her. She was going to die again.

Rey’s hand finally broke his trance as she opened the door. “Get in. And talk to me.”

She had to force him into the car and he sat numbly against her, staring out at the street.

“Where are we going?” The cabbie asked.

He looked at Rey, wishing she could remember.

“Ben,” her voice was strong and determined. “Tell him where we need to go.”

He looked between the two of them, and looked at the driver.

“Have we met before?”
“Nope. Just give me an address. The meter is running.”

He thought he could keep it together, but it was all in the loop. He must have had this driver before. Why didn’t he know where to go?

After taking a deep breath, he gave the Jinn's address and rested his head against the window. Rey slid next to him and grabbed him hard on the leg.

“Hey, come back to me? Talk to me.”

He turned to look at her, seeing her through a haze of dead faces.

“It’s all the same, but still different,” he took a deep breath. “I don’t want you to see me like this.”

“Really, it’s okay. Look at me,” she touched his face. “Focus on what you see. What you hear, and what you smell. What do you see?”

“You, I see you.”

He touched her cheek and she nodded.

“What do you hear?”

“Your voice, the car, my heart.”

She touched his chest. “That means that you’re here. You’re here with me, in this cab.”

He took two long, deep breaths. “I didn’t mean for that to happen.”

“It’s a panic attack,” she said gently. “Ben, you’ve been through so much. I want to help you. What happened this morning wasn’t just something random. I care about you, okay?”

He finally felt like the cab had stopped shaking, even though he didn’t know when it had started. Kylo finally felt like he had returned to the day when she kissed the side of his mouth.

“You’re really here,” he said, mostly to himself. “And we’ll do this.”

“Yes, we will.”

When the world around him started to seem real, and Rey didn’t feel like a ghost, he began feeling more in control. In the cab to the Jinns, his mother finally called. She had the extra key to his place and she promised not to snoop that much. Her call had brought back the seriousness of the day. He was careful to caution her to lock the door and put a dresser or something up against it. If Anakin came looking for him and discovered his grown children there, he might react in an unexpected and violent way. It could throw the entire day off. Hanging up, he stared at his phone. Anakin would know that they talked to Quirin after this and that would draw him to him. It wasn’t the best idea, but it was the only one he had.

“We have to let him be taken,” he said, sombrely. “Maybe that’s why I…I acted like I did just now. He can use Quirin as leverage and will make him feel in control. We’ve taken everything else from him.”

Her hand brushed his. “Are you sure he’ll be okay?”

He looked at her hand and saw the ghost of her ring. This was not that Rey, but he wanted it to be her. He wished that he had found a way to make Anakin stop that day, but it was too elusive. Now,
he knew how to end this and save her and Quirin. He stared off, drifting into his sadness again, choosing that over panic. There were less than fourteen hours left in the day. The clock was always ticking.

“Ben, what is it?” She softly asked. “You’re thinking again.”

He couldn’t shake the feeling when he met her eyes that he didn’t want to leave her. This was the only day that she would really know him and it made him want to find a way to kill Anakin, but he couldn’t think of a way that would make himself feel like less of a monster. He was ruining the day for her.

Concerned, she touched his knee. “It will be okay. We’ll get him.”

“Yes,” he nodded. “We will.”

Quirin was waiting on the front steps when they drove up. It was like he had been waiting for them. Seeing the boy made him shake some of his earlier panic. This was another light in his day that shouldn’t have to see his darkness. He jumped up when he saw it was them and ran to the cab.

“Hi!” He grinned. “You’re here! I knew you were coming.”

“You should be inside,” Kylo frowned. “Have you seen him today?”

The boy shook his head. “Nope. Kylo, will this be the last day? Yesterday really hurt.”

He gestured to his neck and Kylo winced as he knelt beside the boy. The hint of a ghost scar crossed the boy’s skin. He reached out to touch the wound and relived that night in the brief contact. Quirin’s dead eyes and Rey’s shattered skull; both of their blood staining the floor of the dark shack. Quirin grimaced at his strained look and shook his head.

“It’s okay. I… I listened to you. I only looked at you,” he slowly turned to Rey. “Did you die yesterday too?”

Kylo dropped his head. He couldn’t look at her.

“Yes, but I don’t remember,” she put her hand on Kylo’s shoulder and he felt like flinching away, but was still. “Can we go talk to your parents?”

He nodded. “Sure, let’s go.”

As if nothing had happened, he took both of their hands and led them inside. The boy really was resilient to all of this in ways that Kylo didn’t understand.

“Mom! Kylo and Rey are here!” He called as they entered the house. Kristina emerged from the kitchen with a raised eyebrow.

“Um, hello. Qui has been talking about you all morning,” her son ran to her and hugged her. “You took him the aquarium once? When was that?”

Kylo shot Quirin a small joking glare and the boy rolled his eyes. “It’s a long story.”

“I had mac and cheese,” he grinned.

“I’m worried about what you said before, detective,” she shook her head. “Why would he be after Quirin? What is this man?”
He shifted his weight from side to side, trying to figure out how to explain their connection. Being in her house made him feel comfortable. Like on the day when she helped him with his wound and ruined shirt, he knew that she was a caring person. He stood up straighter, realizing he was there as part of his job. He might as well ask her. “Kristina, this will sound weird, but what’s your maiden name?”

She looked briefly uncomfortable. “It’s…Solo.”

He looked at Rey and she nodded at him to keep going.

“My real name is Ben Solo,” he said. “My father was Han Solo. But his father started a second family. Your father was older, right?”

Her shoulders stiffened, reaching for her son. “Yes…so…what are you saying?”

“You’re…my aunt. I’m sorry.”

He wasn’t sure why he was apologizing. He felt a distinct guilt about anyone related to him.

She shook her head. “My father died when I was a child. What is this, detective? What does this have to do with my son?”

“We had the same disorder as infants. Macht-Vis, right? That’s how he found us, through the SHINY database,” he said as Quirin beamed at him. “It’s what connects us and why he’s specifically after Quirin.”

Quirin dashed from his mother to hug Kylo. “This is so cool.”

He sympathetically looked from Kristina to Rey. “Can we talk to him alone? To explain the situation?”

She nodded and motioned towards the stairs, absorbing the sudden arrival of her adult nephew to talk to her son. Following Quirin to his room, he instantly turned to his Lego set.

“Are we going to build something today? It’s pretty fun,” he said, sitting down on the floor to dump out the box of coloured bricks.

He glanced at Rey who shrugged and sat down with him. “What should we build?”

Kylo sat down and helped them with the pieces. Quirin was happily telling Rey about the other days and the other times that they’d met. He told her about how he had counted and used the tracking device. When it got to the sadder parts of the day, his bright mood faded. He had seen and been through so much for someone so young. He’d hopefully bounce back and be okay, but it still bothered Kylo to leave the boy on his own with that man. His mind drifted to the other children and their parents; the heartbreak of the families they had talked to hadn’t faded. They wouldn’t get justice for their murdered children. He really was truly selfish for taking this way out, but he couldn’t bring them back. They had died so many times in the loop as he burnt through them like paper pawns. He briefly thought about telling Quirin to go talk to the families, but that wouldn’t make sense. That would only make them hurt more, knowing that he was the boy who had lived and their sons and daughters were gone.

Quirin put the final piece at the top of his tower and grinned at them. “This is pretty high. I’ve never built one this high before.”

Rey smiled at his excitement. “It’s a lovely tower, Quirin.”
Kylo cleared his throat. “Hey, can I talk to Quirin alone?”

She caught his tone and bit her lip, standing from the floor. Rey left the room with a small nod and brushed Kylo’s shoulder as she left. He sat down on Quirin’s bed and the boy grinned at him.

“Are we really cousins?”

“Yes, we are. That’s why we’re in the same day. And that’s why I’m going to save you,” he looked down at the boy softly, trying to keep his tone focused and not as tortured as he felt. “Listen, Quirin, today won’t be an easy day. He’s going to take you, but he’s not going to hurt you. I promise you. He’s made a deal with me not to hurt you. And if he does, then I’ll see you again tomorrow. I hate him for hurting you. I hate him for hurting Rey and the other children. But don’t let yourself hate him, Quirin, okay? You have to stay you: you have to be happy. Later today, Rey and I will come save you. But Quirin, there is something that I need you to do, once we get to the end of the day.”

“Sure,” he nodded. “I want to help. I know what happens, remember?”

He bit his cheek, needing pain to feel something real, then continued. “This man, he’s my grandfather. But he really wants to hurt me and only me. When we get to where we’re going, I’m going to ask you to take care of Rey, okay? I need to…I need to stop him alone.”

Quirin shook his head, instantly near tears. “No, Kylo, I don’t…why? Are you going to die?”

He met the boy’s eyes. “It will be okay, Quirin, okay? You’ll have your mom and dad and Rey.”

“But I want you too.”

“I…I’ll try for you.” He gave the boy hope with his lie.

“Good.”

He looked at his watch. “We…we need to go now. Come say goodbye to Rey. Just don’t tell her what I told you.”

He still looked upset, tears lingering at the corners of his eyes, but nodded. Rey lifted her head from her phone when they left the boy’s room.

“Everything good?” She asked.

Quirin gave her a small smile and a hug before looking up at Kylo with fierce eyes. Kylo finally nodded and the boy hugged him as well. He walked with them down the stairs and they gave their goodbyes to Mats and Kristina before leaving the house and leaving him to his fate.

“I still don’t like just giving him over,” she frowned, returning to the taxi. “It’s making it too easy.”

Kylo shook his head. “It’s what he wants. If he kills him, he knows I’ll never give up and he’ll be stuck in this day forever. We’re going to catch him and kill him. For everything he’s done. I know I’ve made this personal, but the amount of times that he’s had you killed…I never thought I could hate someone in the way that I hate him. He deserves and needs to die.”

Lying to her took conviction, but she finally shook her head and smiled at him. “It’s going to be over soon.”

“Yeah,” he nodded. “Let’s go meet my mother. Who knows what she’s done to my apartment.”
“It can’t be *that* bad.”

“She’s going to make my bed,” he blushed lightly.

“Oh.”

He brushed up her arm. “Just ignore her comments. She’s lonely and I’m a bad son for never calling. Other than her brother, I’m really the only thing she has since she retired. She moved up to Albany not that long ago and I’m almost never there.”

“I think about my parents quite a bit,” she gazed out the window. “Especially after playing with Quirin. My parents would have never done that with me. I don’t really remember them ever having time for me. I felt like I was always in the way. I wonder where they are, though. I must have more real family out there and I’ll never know them.”

He reached to rub her lower back, pulling himself back from his selfish spiral. “The way that they treated you, they don’t deserve to know the person you became. You’re caring, kind, and should have never felt so alone for so long.”

She glanced back to him. She slid over to rest her head against his shoulder. He enjoyed the quiet moment and let him drift off into good memories of her. He thought about the conversation he had with the Rey in his dream. Echoes of her were still there, in the corners of his mind. They’d always be with him; not just the dark times, but the good times too.

Back at his apartment, he was mildly annoyed to knock on his own door.

“It’s Ben,” he called. He heard the sound of furniture moving and was impressed that they’d actually listened to him.

His uncle opened the door and sighed. “Please tell me that we moved that thing to block the door for a reason.”

“Yes, a very dangerous one,” he nodded, spotting his mother on the floor with the contents of the chest spread around her. “Hi mom.”

She looked up at him. “How did you know about this chest?”

He bit his lip, looking briefly at Rey as she studied the two others in the room. They were eyeing her too and he was tempted to just take her and run, avoiding this conversation.

“It’s like I said, I’m living the same day, over and over again,” he turned from them, heading to his suddenly very clean kitchen. He put on water for tea as he continued speaking. “It’s Anakin who started all of this and he’s out after me, and Palpatine and Kenobi. We need to get that picture in the back of her diary and show them that they knew your parents. It will convince them of their memories, or at least I hope it does.”

“That’s an interesting story,” his mother nodded. “Who’s she?”

“My name is Rey, I’m his partner,” she said, moving to stand by him. “We’re going to stop this man for everything he’s done.”

“Ben,” he cringed at the tone of Leia’s voice. “You’re sleeping with your partner?”

He closed his eyes, taking an unsteady breath. This was the last thing he needed. “Yes, mom.”
Leia stood, straitening her clothes. “How long has this been going on?”

“For me, twenty-four days, that I can remember,” he turned to face her. “For her, it’s the first day.”

His mother looked Rey up and down and her met her eyes. “You look like a nice girl. What are you doing with him?”

“He’s really different today.” she looked over at him and smiled. “The way that he talks and acts, it’s like he’s a different person. It’s all happening so fast, but I really care about him. I look forward to getting to know him more tomorrow.”

He was glad that the kettle started to whistle so he could turn away.

Luke sat down at the kitchen table. “So, back to more important things before she asks for more details. How are you living the same day over and over again?”

Kylo turned to his uncle, setting the teapot down and nodding. “It’s this strange thing that just started happening. At first I thought it was random, like I was going insane. But as we dug deeper and got more clues, we found the connection to the children. Searching through the database, we found my name on the same list as the other kids getting murdered. And then Anakin revealed himself and he’s been after us ever since. He’s hurt so many people and caused so much pain. He doesn’t seem to care about anything but revenge.”

“What do you mean?” Rey reached into his cupboard, finding the teacups to pass around. He couldn’t resist touching her hip as she brushed by him. It was nice to see her being domestic in his home. “Ben?”

Leia sat down and smirked at Rey. “He let’s you call him that?”

She nodded. “Well, today he does.”

Leia looked smug as he poured their tea.

“Leave it alone, mom.”

“What? It was just a question.”

He sat down. “Did you find the diary?”

“Oh, yes,” she said, rising again to retrieve the book from the floor. “I don’t think I’ve ever read this before. She did a lot of writing. I guess it’s a way of getting to know her.”

She handed him the book and he met her eyes. He could at least give her this, a connection to her past. Gently taking the book, he opened it to the back to look at the picture. Holding it in his hand made it all real. This was his grandmother, the woman that Anakin was killing the children for. She was beautiful in the faded old photograph. In the smiling faces of the boys, he saw hints of Palpatine and Kenobi. This was them; this was what he needed to convince them.

“This is great, mom. This is what we need,” he looked at her again. “We can undo some of his damage. This will do so much good.”

Leia studied the picture in his hand. “Who are those boys?”

“Palpatine and Kenobi,” he said. “They don’t remember any of it and he’s using it against them.”

have you met him?"

“Only a few times,” he frowned, sliding the sugar to Rey. She gave him a content look and took it. “He’s lost himself to all of this. He’s done this before, when he killed dad.”

Leia shut her eyes and he saw the pain he had brought up. She sipped at her tea and looked at him with calm but pained eyes. “Why would he do that?”

“I don’t know. There must have been something he wanted then,” he felt Rey’s hand on his leg and reached down to take it in to his, firming their connection. More touches. More moments. He couldn’t leave her with these few empty hours. “I haven’t really asked him, and I don’t want to have that conversation with him. I just know that he’s hurt me before and Han was just trying to stop it.”

They sat in the near silence of his kitchen for a few minutes, listening to the ticking of the clock on the wall, reminding him that the hours were slowly flowing by, drawing him unwillingly, closer to the end. Leia eventually stood, returning to the papers and books on the floor. Luke joined her, flipping through letters and other memories. Rey leaned against his shoulder as he watched his family go through the pieces of their past. This would probably be the last time he’d see them. They’d have to get going at some point, if they were going to do everything today.

“I’m sorry,” Rey said. “About your father.”

“It was a long time ago,” he kissed her forehead. “But it feels good to have an answer about why he left us. I was mad at him for years. I can let go of that now. He died for me and mom. He didn’t die trying to be a hero, like I always thought. I miss him, Rey. He would have made me think through this day and not make all of the stupid mistakes that I’ve made. I think that he would have liked you.”

She exhaled slowly. “How could anyone do this to their own family?”

“He thought he could use the loop to save her and he never could,” he closed his eyes, feeling her warmth. It reminded him that she was still alive, but he was also making the same selfish choice, day after day. “It must have made him what he is. Being stuck in the loop, it’s hard to keep yourself together. You meet people who you know, but they don’t know you. You know what people are going to say and what they are going to do. You think you can change things, but then something else goes wrong. You think you have all the pieces, and then a new part just falls in your lap. Watching someone you love die over and over again is heart breaking because you know that it might happen again the next day, and then the day after that.”

She leaned up to hug him and he sighed in her arms. “But not today.”

“But not today.”

He heard his mother laugh at something and turned to look over at her.

“It’s my birth certificate,” she smiled, holding it up to show him. “Lord, I was a fat baby.”

He tilted his head, part of the day still bothering him. “What time were you born?”

“11.59 at night.”

There it was. That’s why she never lived past midnight. Anakin knew and would forever connect her to that time.
“When was Luke born?”

He heard her rifling around and gently shifted away from Rey to look over their papers. She followed, reaching for his hand.

His mother held up another faded piece of paper. “1.59 in the morning. See, I told you I was the older one.”

Kylo gripped Rey’s hand tighter. “Those are the times that you die, and I fall asleep.”

“That’s…but that’s not a coincidence,” she said with a small frown.

“Nothing is today.”

Luke rose to his feet. “Well, Ben, you’ve got a real problem here. Is there anything else that we can do?”

He shook his head. “Well, you can have lunch with us. Then, I want you two to go home. I don’t want you in the city with him around. Who knows what he’s capable of.”

His mother eyed him at his tone. “We can help you, Ben.”

He firmed his face. “I’m doing everything I can to keep everyone safe. Except for…except for Quirin. That’s the boy that he tried to use to end the loop and it wouldn’t work, since I ended up in it too. Anakin has to take him to think that he’s still in charge. But he’ll be okay. Anakin knows that if he hurts him, this day will just start all over again and we’ll keep shutting down his accomplices and he won’t be able to change it.”

“That can’t be easy,” Luke shook is head. “Knowing that you might have to do all of this again.”

“This day has never been easy,” he gripped Rey’s hand. “But I have her and that makes it a little better.”

She gave him a small smile. “I’m glad I can help.”

Rey looked almost relaxed around his family and it surprised him. It was so much easier for her to be around strangers. But another part of him was screaming that it was because she truly wanted to stay with him and to be with him. She wanted a family. And he’d given her one. But they’d still be there for her if he was gone.

Lunch was ordered from some place down the street. He kept watching his phone, waiting for anyone to call and say that someone had been kidnapped or killed. But there was nothing. They would still have to go to the lab after this and get their phones fixed, but Anakin knew that they were at home. But who knows where he was right then. He had to be making his move on Quirin, but without help. It made a part of him slightly pleased that the old man was powerless.

Rey helped his mother set the table and he went out onto the balcony. He was almost glad to hear them chat about silly things from her past. Why she had been a cop. How could she put up with him. Why the bed had been unmade. That was the point where he needed to flee. Looking out over the city, he thought about the man they were after and everything that he had done. He killed without mercy. He almost killed with glee. It made him sick.

He heard the door open and saw his uncle out of the corner of his eye.

“You look good,” Luke said. “She’s really changed you.”
He nodded. “I was a jerk to her before all of this happened. I thought she was annoying and tried too hard. I hated being partnered with her and didn’t make things easy for her. It all seems stupid now, because she’s really all I have. I love her so much and she dies, every day. I’ve let her die alone and it just burns through me. I hate thinking about the way that he’s hurt her. Sometimes, when I close my eyes, I still see her dead from the previous days. I feel her in the places that she’s died. I don’t know how to stop these thoughts.”

“You have to find a way, Ben,” Luke stood beside him. “I don’t really know her, but she seems nice and normal. Almost out of your league.”

He shot his uncle a look.

“But if you really love her, you can work through that, okay?” His uncle ignored the mock glare. “I’ve been bitter for so long about how I grew up. Now it almost seems like a blessing not to have grown up with that man.”

“You’ve never…this has never happened to you?” He asked, a dark idea rising in the back of his mind.

Luke shook his head. “Nothing like you are describing. Strange dreams sometimes about places that I’m sure I’ve never been, but that happens to everyone.”

The door buzzer interrupted them, distantly rattling to life inside the apartment. His shoulders went stiff as he went to the door. “Yeah?”

“Did you order food?” A young female voice asked.

“Did anyone follow you?”

“Uh, no. Do you want it or not?”

He glared at the intercom. “I’ll come down.”

“Here!” His mother called. “Take money.”

He gave Rey a look as he accepted the cash. Let her have it her way. He left his family and was prepared to see Anakin holding a knife to the young woman’s neck when he came downstairs, but there was nothing. Just a delivery girl, holding up a couple of bags. It had better not be Chinese.

“Thanks,” he said. “How much?”

“$65. Enjoy your lunch!”

He gave her $100 and didn’t accept the change. He was still on edge when he returned to his apartment. But everyone was fine, waiting for him. It was almost a strange feeling not to see someone lying there dead, on his floor. He wanted to resist relaxing, but gradually he let go of his lingering anxiety as he shared the meal with his family. They had thankfully ordered Italian. He was glad to avoid Poe’s choices of Chinese food again. He looked forward to talking to the man, and giving him the times and places to put the case together, to keep the men they had in custody.

But he had really boring choices in food.

They had finished eating and it was after the seventh time that he had checked his watch that his mother finally sighed. “I guess we should be going.”

“I didn’t mean to be rude,” he looked up, seeing the lines around her eyes and distant determination
that she had when ever she looked at him. “We have eleven hours to find him. And we still need to check in with Dameron and the captain.”

He’d been carefully ignoring texts from the office: none of them were acute, but were mostly wondering where the hell they were and how they could keep their suspects in custody without more evidence. Again, he was rushing the day. He took a few deep breaths to stop the oncoming roll of panic. It worked; Rey’s words from before centred him in the day, in the moment, and even in the hour.

His mother hugged Rey as they were saying their goodbyes.

“Take care of him,” she said. “He’s already acting more like he used to, when he was younger. I’ve missed that little boy.”

He accepted her hug next. “I’m sorry I kept him from you for so long.”

She held onto his arm and he had to fight to keep his face steady and not betray the plan he had in his mind. His mother could always see through him and he saw the hint of tears before she blinked them away. She nodded and after Luke gave them both a goodbye handshake, they left. Alone with Rey, he exhaled and ran a hand through his hair.

“That wasn’t so bad.”

“No, it was fine,” he looked over at the chest that they had packed up and left for him. He tucked the picture into his inner pocket and sighed, “It’s sad that my grandmother could not get him to stop. He must have told her every day that he was going to make it right; but he never could.”

She took his hand and he looked numbly at her. She smiled lightly at him and tugged at him to get going. He wasn’t sure what Anakin was planning, so he made the decision to take his car. For all he knew, it was being tracked too, but he could get someone to look at that. So far, they had just done relatively normal things. Anakin had been isolated again, but there was always a chance he’d try something else.

The extra security at the house seemed to be tighter today. The captain met them with tired eyes when they knocked at his door.

“How did you find out about all of these people?” He gestured to the folders on his desk. “And what the hell have you two been doing all day?”

He wanted to snap at him, but the distant memory of his death gnawed at him to stop. He nodded at the man and took a seat across from him. There would be some tasks that they would have to do to collect the evidence, but he knew where it was and how to get it. He really didn’t want to spend part of this day doing it over again, but he owed it to Poe not to dump it on him.

“We had some leads from some sources,” he said, hoping to convince him. “We have to check the security and traffic cameras, but we can connect him to the child killer. His name is Anakin Skywalker, and he’s been threatening the DA and his opponent. He has done this before, under the name of Vader. If you trace previous murders of children in clusters, you will be able to find him. We have a source that we can point to on that.”

The captain firmed his face. “And you’ve done all of this today?”

He could only shrug, almost amused at the reaction. “It’s been a breakthrough day.”

Tekka nodded. “That would explain why ADA Holdo is here, begging us not to arrest her for being
caught up with some man named Skywalker. So she’s involved too.”

“Yes. He might or might not show up at the Kenobi benefit tonight, but we think we know where he will be.”

The captain looked at them and their body language, angled towards one another. “So, this is what happens when you actually work together?”

He winced. “Yes. It’s been a long morning, but the day’s not over yet. Rey is good at her job and I’ve been in her way. I think I also you an apology for how I’ve acted since you partnered us up. It was childish and I hope that you’ll let us continue to work together on this case.”

Tekka sat back, stunned at his words. “You never apologize and actually mean it. In all the years you’ve been here, you’ve made it hard on everyone around you. What is going on today?”

Rey spoke up. “We just found a rhythm, sir. And we’d like to continue working on what we know so we can stop him.”

“And we should probably have someone watch the DA,” he added.

The older man sat back, still taking in how they were acting. “Well, I’m not about to stop you. Just make the report very detailed and don’t leave anything out.”

They both nodded and escaped to the lab. He felt Rey’s hand brushing his side and took it.

“That wasn’t so bad,” he mumbled. “I don’t want to write the report.”

“I’ll do it,” she said. “You can just tell me what to write.”

He put his hand on her lower back. “We’ll leave out the part about the time loop. And the sleeping together part.”

“That’s probably a good idea,” she winked.

They reached the lab and Dameron was just leaving his room. He eyed them and their relatively good mood.

“Since when do you look happy to see me?” He smirked.

“It’s for helping us out this morning,” Kylo answered. “And for everything else.”

Dameron motioned them back into his part of the lab area. “That’s the second time you’ve thanked me. How did you know about my sister? And that whacko with the truck?”

He looked at Rey who nodded. “I’m living the same day, over and over again. It’s the twenty-fourth time and I know how to get the day right, finally. We’ve stopped all of his accomplices, and now it’s just a waiting game. You’ve helped me before, once I stopped thinking of you as a suspect. You’ve taken Elias on other days. When the killer wanted to hurt me, he would hurt the people I care about. I don’t want another one of those days again and I want all of this to stop.”

Poe sat down, heavily. He looked between the both of them, and let out a shaky breath. “So, you know what my sister had planned?”

He nodded. “Did you talk to her?”

“She started crying and wouldn’t stop. Elias was really upset when he saw her like that. But she’s
been dealing with this for years. I don’t know if she can change, but I convinced her to let Elias stay with a neighbour so she could think things through by herself for today. I’ll go talk to her again once I’m done here, at some point. If this day ever ends,” he looked more tired than he had ever before. “But I’m glad I talked to her. I hope that it will be okay.”

“I hope so too,” Kylo said. “It’s about time that this day ended.”

Bebe entered the room and started when she saw them. He looked at her with sympathy rather than a glare. He took out his phone and just handed it to her. She grimaced when she saw the SIM card.

“Did I…did I do this? I don’t remember.”

“It’s okay. It wasn’t really your fault,” he said. “He’s put pressure on a lot of people. I’m glad your father is okay.”

She finished his phone and he gestured at Rey to hand her’s over. The same procedure was repeated.

“His too.”

Poe rolled his eyes. “We’ll have to talk about this later.”

She nodded, looking ashamed and slightly shocked. “Should I go do something boring?”

Kylo had grabbed a pad of paper, trying to remember the camera locations and the times. He sketched out a rough idea and handed it to her. “You can go through these tapes and see when a man in black meets his contacts. This will tie it all together, and we’ll have a case and some sort of solace for the families. It will also keep at least Hux and Snoke locked up. The other two, I’m guessing, have caused enough trouble that we don’t have to work that hard on them.”

Dameron shook his head. “I still don’t get how you know all this. You were walking around yesterday like you knew nothing and had nothing except a bunch of dead kids. Now, bam, names, dates, places. None of this is possible.”

“But it’s still happening,” he said, checking his watch. “Look, we have to head out in a while. We’re waiting for the last boy to be taken.”

“You’re letting him take another child?”

“It’s not like that,” he managed a soft look. “He’s promised not to hurt him. I don’t trust his word, but he knows I will never end this day until both the boy and Rey live.”

He raised a dark eyebrow. “What’s he talking about?”

Rey turned from the window she’d been gazing out. “I die, every day. Ben told me about some of the times that it’s happened and it sounds so real. He acts like it’s really happened, and I believe it. The way he sounds, what he does. He’s so different today and can’t explain how he knows things about me and this day. I trust him, no matter how strange it all sounds.”

“It’s my job to help you guys and your hunches, but I appreciate that you have some actual evidence to connect all of these people,” he stood and stretched. “I should go help her and talk to her.”

Kylo stopped him. “Can I talk to you alone for a minute?”
Poe looked over at Rey who shrugged, but nodded. He’d have to explain it to her later, but hoped she wouldn’t figure it out.

“Come on,” he said, leading him to the crash room. “What can’t you tell your partner?”

Kylo folded his arms. “I’m going to do something today that you told me not to do before. I’m sorry about that because you’re right. There are good things that I can do in the world, but I don’t think that I can get over everything I’ve seen and what I’ve done.”

“Okay, what are you talking about?” He sat down. “Explain it to me slowly because I’m tired and can only take so much insanity.”

Sitting on the other bed, Kylo sighed. “The reason that Rey dies is because of me. The man that’s doing this, Anakin Skywalker, he knows how I feel about her and how much it kills me to see her die. I’ve felt happy with her, and then he’ll blow us up or shoot her, stab her, or throw her off a bridge. I see that when I close my eyes, no matter how hard I try to focus on the good things about loving her. If I give him what he wants, then she’ll be free. She won’t have to be with someone who’s broken and haunted. I’ve made too many mistakes. I just want it to be over and for her to be with someone who doesn’t trick her into loving him. I know that you don’t know me today, but you seem to be able to make sense of this. I’m losing myself in every minute of this day and I need someone to talk to who can see through…well, my own bullshit.”

Exhaling heavily, Poe leaned back. “You’re blaming yourself for something that’s not your fault. It’s the same with my sister. She’s messed up, I try to help her, and then she’s still messed up. Addiction is also a loop that’s hard to break. But I keep trying and today, you kept me from doing something stupid and breaking her trust in me. Ky- wait, why did she call you Ben? Didn’t you tell me to call you that?”

“It’s my name,” he shrugged. “I just didn’t use it. Before today.”

“Why today?”

“It felt like the day to start letting go of the past. Part of that will be letting go of her. Anakin is my grandfather and he fell into this darkness because he couldn’t let go of the woman who he loved. She was always going to die, and he would have to keep killing her to have one more day with her. He couldn’t make it right. The right thing for me to do, is to stop the cycle,” he looked at his hands. “I really need you to help her. I’m worried that she’s going to try to stop me.”

“Well, she cares about you, you idiot, of course she’s going to stop you,” he sighed and reached to grasp Kylo’s leg. “Okay, it looks like you’ve been through a lot. Even if it’s all in your head, you look exhausted. Just think about what you’re planning to do. You’re not like him if you’re actually thinking about these things. You haven’t lost yourself yet, and if you have her, it might be worth it to think it over.”

“And if I go through with it?”

Poe slowly stood up. “Then I promise I’ll help her. Look, if I see you tomorrow, I’ll actually be happy. You’ve been such a dick with this case that I was about to start blocking your calls. But, here you are: big, sad, brown eyes, looking at me like I’m the only person that understands you. It freaks me out, but hell, you knew about my sister and Bebe’s dad and all of that. As long as you give me evidence that I can tie to this killer, I can do whatever you ask of me. But I swear to God, Ben, or whatever you’re calling yourself now, if I don’t see you tomorrow, I can tell you now how mad I’m going to be. You can’t just walk in with a woman like that, who’s looking at you with all of that love in her eyes, and walk away because you’re feeling sorry for yourself. So, if you’re
done saying goodbye, I’m going to go find the evidence that you’ll need for your 1,000 page report about this fucked up case and your fucked up family.”

He left Kylo alone and he sat back, letting the words sink in. Like the previous day, the man had seen straight through him. It was another voice in his head, tearing him between his three choices. After a few solitary minutes, he heard a soft knock at the doorway and Rey came in when he looked up.

“What was that?” She asked.

“I just wanted to talk to him about his sister,” he held her hands as she sat down across from him. “It reminded me of your parents. They were so desperate and only thinking about themselves. I couldn’t let another child feel lost and alone, thinking that no one cared about them.”

She looked like she wanted to believe his lie and slowly nodded. “You’re also worried about something else.”

“It’s Quirin,” he shook his head. “Seeing him playing today, I don’t know how he’ll grow up whole.”

“You’ll be there to talk to him. You can help each other,” she ran her hands up his legs, squeezing his thighs to make him listen. “If there’s something you can’t say to me, you can talk to him.”

“You liked going to the aquarium with him,” he smiled. “You had a dream about it. That’s why we went there.”

She moved to the other bed and rested her head on his shoulder. “I know we don’t have a lot of time, but tell me about some of the other good days. You’ve said that we’ve had them. I want to know.”

He kissed her forehead and slowly began to tell her about the day at the beach, having dinner and coffee and just doing normal things. Taking Quirin to the aquarium and watching him look at the animals was another simple, but good day. He told her about kissing her for the first time and how he always waited for her to stop him from kissing her. He came to the day of their random wedding and felt his ears burn.

“I don’t think I asked you just to make you happy,” she firmly said. “I may seem like I always think things through and have my life together, but sometimes I can’t resist just doing something spontaneous and fun. It wouldn’t have been hard, since I care about you today, so I must have cared about you then.”

“Some days, I can still feel the ring. The hard days have been where you’ve died in such pain. One day, I had to spend most of the time without you, talking to families about their murdered children. I don’t know how I did it. He’d shot you and you died on the operating table. I thought that they could save you, but you died without me. I am so selfish thinking that you feel better when I’m there. But the first time, the first day, when you died, you reached for me. I held you as you died, thinking you had saved the boy. You were so afraid, and still turned to me,” he sadly shook his head. “I don’t know why.”

She kissed his cheek. “You have to let it go, Ben. Be here with me, today. We’re going to get him and we can move on, and have a life. We’ll have to get different partners, but I can’t think of being with anyone else.”

“You’ve only known me for a day,” he closed his eyes.
“That doesn’t mean I can’t fall in love with someone in one day.”

He looked at her, shifting to meet her lips. She deepened the kiss and sighed, letting his hands roam up her side.

“I love you,” he said again. “Thank you for making me realize that I don’t have to feel angry and alone all the time.

“Thank you for helping me not feel alone and plain anymore.”

He checked his watch. They’d have to call Kenobi and Palpatine, but there was another thing he wanted to do.

“Do you want to go play hero again?” He asked, helping her to his feet.

“Oh?” She asked. “Another robbery?”

He shook his head. “It’s a little more complicated. The day that he tossed you off the bridge, there was a hole in the safety fence. I couldn’t figure out why, but yesterday — the other today — I saw the news and there’s a young woman who’s in trouble. We have to stop her.”

“That sounds like a very sweet plan, Ben,” she smiled. “Have you stopped her before?”

Embarrassed, he shook his head. “Yesterday was the first time that I really considered the other people in this day and the pain that they’re in and the things wrong in their lives. I’ve been using this day all wrong.”

“Then let’s go do some right.”

Borrowing a car, the drive to the Queensboro went faster than he’d imagined. It was after the lunch rush, so he enjoyed finally feeling in control of the day. Anakin couldn’t follow them anymore; that would probably set him off after Quirin. They’d hear from him at some point and then they’d have to be in action. But now, they had to talk to a young woman who he felt very akin too. Then it would be the long conversation with Kenobi and Palpatine. There were so many people left to talk about and to, but doing something different would make it feel easier to meet with them.

Parking a couple of blocks away, he took her hand and thought about why she cared about him. He still wondered how it was possible. She liked people and could easily talk with them. Recalling her oversight with the blind girl, he also knew that she still had faults. She wasn’t perfect, but was perfect to him.

Reaching the walking path, he felt some of the apprehension about being in the same spot again. She felt him tense and squeezed his hand. There were places that would always make him afraid for her and what had happened there. The roof, her apartment, his apartment. He shook off the feeling, noticing a figure down the path. A girl, barely a teenager, stood in a purple hoodie, looking at the caution tape around the gap in the fence. As they approached, he caught the outline of a knife in her front pocket. This was her: the girl from the news story. It was just reported as an accidental fall, but he could read between the lines.

She put her arms on the railing and stepped forward when she heard them approach.

“Hi,” Rey said, softly. “Are you okay?”

The girl turned, her eyes red from crying. “I’m fine, thanks.”
They stood on either side of her, putting their hands on the railing beside her.

“You don’t look like you’re fine,” he said.

She shook her head. “No, no, it’s nothing. I just come here to think sometimes. The cars sound...nice.”

“I’m Rey,” his partner said. “And he’s Ben.”

“Hey,” her hands tensed on the railing. “I’m Amber.”

“What’s wrong, Amber?” He asked.

She tucked her hands back into her hoodie. “It’s none of your business.”

“It’s everyone’s business when someone’s sad,” Rey said softly. “What happened?”

The girl’s shoulders tensed and then sagged. The words came spilling out of her mouth, as if no one had ever asked her before. “I messed everything up, you know? I was stupid and now everyone hates me. I hate school and all of my friends just hate me.”

Rey reached for her and the girl pulled away. She kept looking through the gap, turning her knife in her pocketed hand.

“It’s okay, Amber,” Kylo slowly said. “We saw you standing here and were wondering why you were so sad. If something bad happened, it wasn’t your fault. No matter what your friends think.”

She shook her head, tears coming to her eyes. “It was stupid. I’m so stupid.”

“Maybe you made a stupid decision, but that doesn’t make you stupid,” he said, feeling like he was talking to himself at the same time. “Why do you think that this would fix this mistake?”

“Then I’d be gone,” she said, flatly. “I’d be gone and it would be over.”

“Nothing’s over when you’re gone. There are people who will miss you, people who care about you. Even if you think that they won’t, there’s a world out there filled with everyone who’s ever loved and cared about you,” he tried to meet her eyes but she looked away. “What happened? Maybe we can talk about it. I think that no one has ever asked you what’s wrong before.”

“No one…No one has ever cared,” she bit her lip, quivering. “I got…drunk at a party. This guy, I thought he liked me. He’s so popular, and I’m such a loser. Why would anyone even like me, let alone love me.”

“What did he do, Amber?” Rey asked.

“He…took me upstairs. But I was so out of it. I don’t remember even going up there. Then…then he’s inside me and he’s laughing at me when I told him to stop. I blacked out and then…then I woke up and everyone knew. He sent it in the group chat and everyone just thinks I’m a slut. I didn’t even want to go to the party!” She shouted the last part, looking up at the sky. “I don’t know how to make it stop.”

He looked over at Rey who slowly reached for the girl again. “Amber, I’m going to tell you something, okay? Maybe this will help you, but tell me to stop if it doesn’t sound like it will. Okay? When I was in high school, a man broke into my house. He hurt my aunt and I tried to stop him. He hurt me and took advantage of me. He raped me, and I hadn’t even been with anyone
before. It hurt and I felt like the pain would never stop. He took something from me that I thought I’d never get back. I woke up everyday feeling worthless and broken, because he’d taken something so important to me.”

Amber accepted Rey’s hand and fresh tears sprang to her eyes. “How did you make it better? How did you make it stop hurting?”

Rey gently pulled the girl into a hug, holding her as she sobbed. She nodded over her shoulder at Kylo, who quickly snatched the knife from her hoodie. Amber didn’t notice.

“It’s still a part of me. The worst thing to do is pretend it never happened,” she gently held the girl, but was looking at Kylo as she spoke. “There are bad things that happen to us and we can’t escape them, but we can think about how they fit in with our story. We can’t change it, but we can make it our own. That’s how you get yourself and your power back. High school is hard, no matter what your friends say and how much fun they seem to be having. What happened to you wasn’t your fault. Don’t ever think like that, okay? You need help, and the police and your family can help you. There are so many people you can talk to. What do you want to do in the future? Where do you want to go to school?”

Amber nodded on her shoulder. “I want to go to art school.”

“Think about that. Picture yourself in college, working on a project. Think about how you want to put yourself into everything you make. You’re not a bad person just because bad things have happened to you,” Rey rubbed small circles on the girl’s back.

Amber slowly pulled away, looking at them. “You guys are cops, aren’t you?”

“Yeah,” Kylo said. “But you’re not in any trouble. We just want you to be okay.”

After a second, she finally nodded. “I just want to go home.”

“You have to tell your parents what happened. We can talk to them if you want,” Rey said as they slowly began leading her off of the bridge.

“Yeah…I’d like that,” she slumped against Rey as they walked back to the car.

There was so much more sadness in the world that he couldn’t stop, but they might have fixed this part. They had made it easier for her on the day that Rey had died on the bridge. She didn’t even need to cut the tape. They brought the girl home to a small brownstone. She started crying to her mother as her father sat with Kylo and Rey. He let the late afternoon sun blur the small kitchen as she did the talking. She assured them that their daughter was in distress, but wasn’t in real trouble for damaging the fence. They gave him some numbers to both helplines and free clinics that she could go to, with or without their permission. They promised to help her in any way that they could and looked pained at what she had kept from them for a few weeks. She had been withdrawn and stayed home from school and they were too afraid to ask. Amber gave them a small wave when they said goodbye. Part of the interaction made him feel better, but it still tore him up inside.

“What you said was really good,” he said, slipping his arm around her as they left. “How are you feeling?”

She gave him a small smile and shrugged. “It happened so long ago, over a decade. But it gave me a purpose. I knew what I wanted to do. Helping her today, in a way, was helping myself when I was a teenager. I hope she’ll be okay.”

“Well, what would you do if you could go back in time and help her out?”

“Me too. But you were saying some of those things to me too.”
She firmed her face, standing outside the car. “I meant them too. I do care about you, Ben. You seem to be afraid to share these things with me, and I don’t want you to be. Believe me, okay?”

“I do,” he paused outside the car. “And I will. I just need some time.”

There were so many things to say, but he wasn’t sure how to tell her about them. His phone finally rang from an unknown number during the silent drive back into the city to talk to Palpatine and Kenobi. He looked from the number to Rey and took a deep breath. This would be Anakin. He was pulled back into the pressure of the day and welcomed it. Whatever he was planning, he wouldn’t be happy with them.

“Kylo?” It was Quirin’s shaking voice that filled his ears and he gripped the steering wheel.

“Quirin? What’s happening?”

“He…he took me. Mom and dad are okay. He told me to tell you that…” the boy trailed off and he heard Anakin’s voice in the background. “You know where to find him. And to see you tonight. Kylo, I’m scared. I’m trying to be brave but…”

The phone was ripped from the boy’s hand and the line went silent. He stared at the ended call and took a deep breath.

“He’s got him,” he set the phone down, harshly. “What time is it?”

“Just after four.”

“Okay, call Palpatine,” he ran a frustrated hand over his face. “Tell him to meet us where Kenobi’s having the benefit. We have to get them both at once. Maybe they can help one another to remember. He’ll call back. Or show up. Whatever makes him feel more in control.”

Rey slowly nodded, worry crossing her face. “I hope he’ll listen.”

He heard the phone ringing before Palpatine finally answered. He heard the faint sounds of the man’s voice as Rey argued with him to come to the hotel benefit. It was only when she gave the names Ben Solo and Anakin Skywalker that he finally gave in. She gave him a small look of victory when she hung up.

“He’ll be there at five,” she said.

“Good, it will take us that long to get there.”

“Do we just surprise Kenobi?”

He nodded. “It’s better that way.”

When they finally parked, he tried to shake the shame in having put Quirin in this situation, but he knew that Anakin wouldn’t kill him. But he could hurt him and make him feel pain; he couldn’t undo that. That would make him start the day again, so he hoped that Anakin wouldn’t dare.

Reaching the front desk, they asked for Kenobi.

“He’s upstairs, getting ready,” the cheerful front-desk clerk informed them. “I can call him and tell him you’re looking for him. Your name?”

“Ben Solo,” he said, flatly. “He knows who I am. Tell him to meet us in the bar.”
He still felt wound up from the taunt by Anakin. Rey sat next to him at a table facing the entrance. She slowly rubbed circles on his lower back and he leaned into the touch. He couldn’t leave her, thinking of him being this angry. He let some of the tension go, leaning over to kiss her. She gently responded before pulling away. Her hand brushed up his inner thigh and he sighed.

“There you are, Ben,” she smirked. “Don’t be Kylo again, okay?”

He smiled at her. “Thanks for reminding me.”

He tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and trailed his fingers down her neck. She could always bring him back to himself, from whatever edge he was on. Quirin would be okay, he told himself. And Rey was still here, alive, despite the weight of the ghost he felt lurking upstairs.

He leaned over to whisper in her ear. “I had you in one of the ballrooms, during this benefit before.”

She seemed to shiver at his tone. “Why were we here?”

“To talk to Kenobi. That’s when we found out he was using the name Skywalker. It was almost like being undercover,” he traced the collar of her shirt. “You looked beautiful in that dress. There was another dress you wore on our day to the beach. I never saw you in anything like that before.”

She looked away, embarrassed. “We never really spent time off work together.”

“I’m sorry I wasted all this time with you,” he took her hand and kissed it. “I’ve even started to like your friend Maz’s bar.”

She smirked. “That surprises me. But it does grow on you.”

Kenobi’s arrival interrupted them and he scanned the room, looking for someone he knew of but didn’t recognize. Palpatine would be there soon. They had to keep him there. He stood and Kenobi’s sharp eyes found him.

“So, you must be Ben Solo,” he said. “I know a man who was very interested in meeting you, but now is quite mad at you.”

“For ruining his plans?” He sat down, gesturing at the chair across from them.

He frowned, clearly agitated by their presence, but too curious to refuse. “I don’t know what you did, but you’ve really screwed up his plans and threatened my campaign.”

“He’s threatening your campaign in more ways than that,” he said. “We know that Holdo has been giving secrets to both sides and that if it came out, both of your careers would be over.”

He paled and his stance softened. “How did you know about that?”

He caught Palpatine out of the corner of his eye and leaned over to get his attention. The man looked red faced and about to burst, he turned to see Kenobi sitting there and threw up his hands.

“Sit down, Sheev,” Kylo commanded. “We’re actually here to help you.”

Angrily, he took a seat. “What is this about detectives? Why do we have apparent accomplices, but no killer? Why are you sitting here, with him, in a bar, when you should be doing your jobs?”

He pulled the picture from his inner pocket and put it on the table without a word. The two men looked at the faded photograph, then to each other, then back to Kylo.
“Do you know who she is?” He asked.

Kenobi slowly reached for the picture, studying it. He finally sighed. “I don’t know…But that’s clearly me. Who is this woman?”

Palpatine just glared at him. Kylo met his eyes with a calm challenge.

“And is that you too?” He asked. “Do you know her?”

“What is this about?” He cast an angry glare at the picture. “Where did you get this?”

“From the man who’s been manipulating the both of you to get revenge on something that happened when you were kids,” he said, taking the picture to hold up to the both of them. “This woman was my grandmother. Her husband was Anakin Skywalker and he blames you both for her death.”

They were both silent, looking painfully confused, reaching for memories that were there, but obscured, blurred by years of torture.

“What happened to her?” Kenobi finally asked, his voice small.

He sighed. “We read in her diary that you two were helping her, sometime around when this picture was taken in the late 50s. You were fixing up the nursery and there was an accident and she fell. Anakin was out of town and couldn’t get back in time. She really died in childbirth not long after, but he has the idea that the fall took her from him. This is all about revenge, no matter what he is promising you and the money that he’s giving you both. He’s just planning on destroying you two and everything that you’ve worked for. But this pictures shows that you were there and that he’s made you forget.”

“How…how is that possible?” Palpatine shook his head, folding his arms. “How can someone force you to forget part of your childhood?”

Kenobi gazed over at him. “So you don’t remember either?”

He blinked at him, clearly wanting to argue, but holding back. “It’s…I’ve obviously seen pictures of myself at that age, but there are just blanks.”

They both looked at Kylo, seeking answers.

“Her name was Padmé. She’s the mother of Luke and Leia,” he pointed at Kenobi. “I know that you know them. And my father.”

“Padmé?” Kenobi tested out the name. He sat back, slowly a sad look crossed his face. “He…he was a doctor. She was worried that he wouldn’t be back before the children came.”

He felt Rey’s hand on his leg tense and he gave her a quick look.

Palpatine slowly closed his eyes. “We were pen pals. Through the private school. My mother bought you your tickets to come visit.”

He took Rey’s hand and almost smiled. They were remembering. They were fixing Anakin’s destructive efforts. It would all be undone. He wasn’t so useless afterall.

“He…he came too late,” Kenobi shook his head. “We didn’t know what to do when she fell. We tried to help. I…it made me want to become a doctor. I wanted to know how to help people like
her.”

“So you remember now?” Kylo asked. “And you understand why he’s doing all of this?”

“My God,” Kenobi put his face in his hands. “What have I done? This…there is no coming back from this, if he releases the documents.”

Palpatine sat silent, looking at the wall beyond Kylo’s head. He slowly sighed and stood from the table. “My ADA is already confessing all of her errors. I…it’s not the right thing to let her take the fall. Detective, I don’t know how you found out this information, but thank you for sharing it with us.”

“Don’t take any phone calls from him,” Kylo warned. “And please accept the extra security that we’re offering. He’s still out there. I don’t think he’ll kill you, but he’s very angry and dangerous.”

Kenobi undid his tie and cursed. “Well, all of this is pointless. I have to go cancel this thing and try to put out some fires. It’s going to be a long night of dealing with very annoyed people. I need a drink.”

The two men slowly locked eyes again.

“We’ll need to discuss this,” Palpatine gestured. “All of this.”

“Yes, we will,” Kenobi nodded. “Thank you, Ben. I hope your mother is well.”

They were left alone and she hugged him. Sighing into her shoulder, he let the moment wash over him. Whatever Anakin had planned, they had stopped this part. All of his days, all of the children whom he’d killed, had been undone by a single photograph by Mrs Kenobi.

“What do we do now?” She asked when he sat back. It wasn’t even six yet. He hated just waiting for Anakin; that burnt him last time. But this time, Anakin knew he would get his answer.

He checked his phone and frowned. Nothing.

“Can I buy you dinner?” He asked.

She smiled lightly at him. “Dinner would be nice.”

He saw Kenobi talking to the front desk with a nervous Ahsoka beside him. Her arms were folded, clearly not happy with what was going on. She might have lost her job, or at least an important client. He couldn’t come up with a way to make it up to her, except for hoping that she would bounce back. She was still young. He always missed something. He tried to shake it off as they walked to the restaurant area of the elegant hotel. It wouldn’t be quite perfect, but he had undone some of Anakin’s damage on the future. He could live with that for the few hours he had left.

They ordered, without any wine. It wasn’t a perfect meal, but Rey looked like she was enjoying the company more than the food. She smiled at him and brushed his leg with her foot throughout the meal. It was a simple, but good dinner. She looked satisfied with her dishes and he wished they would have more time together. After all of her touches, he couldn’t help give in to her flirting and took her hand on the table, rubbing the spot where her ring should be. He sighed at the sensation but tried to look at her with caring eyes when she sent him a questioning look.

“This has been a long day, Rey,” he said. “I’m glad I got to spend it with you.”

She nodded, slipping one of her hands free to take a drink of water. “What do you do for fun?”
“Fun?”

“Yeah,” she replied. “Tell me.”

“I like to read. Go for runs. I used to like hiking when I was younger, but there’s no time for that now. I like… I guess normal things. I don’t really like doing things with many people around, like going to concerts or big parties. I mean, I can do it. I just don’t like it,” he watched her grin grow. “Movies are okay.”

“So no weird hobbies? Bird watching?”

*Well, there’s this one bird,* he thought with a bit of a smirk. “No, nothing like that. I think I collected stamps for five minutes when I was six before I realized how boring it was.”

“We read a lot at work, what else do you like to read?”

“History, true crime, nothing really light,” he focused on the tip of her nose and how it looked when she smiled. “What do you like? Besides freezing to death on hiking trips?”

“I told you about that?” She laughed. “Oh, he was just horrible. I don’t know why I dated him. But I guess I like fairly normal things too. Music helped me as a child, so I like having music around me. Sometimes I read trashy novels just to forget what we work with. I wish I had more time to travel. I haven’t really been home in so long, that it would be nice to go back one day just to see if it’s as horrible as I remember it.”

“I wish I could take you there,” he returned to studying her hand. He could call Maz and get the rings, but that would just be another selfish thing that would tie her to him. “I wonder what would have happened if we just got on a plane on one of the days. He probably would have blown up half the city looking for us.”

“Then it’s probably for the best,” she sadly nodded. “What happened when we tried to run?”

He firmed his face. “He followed us, until I figured out how he was tracking us through our phones and credit cards. The first time that we were together was in a hotel room. He tracked us down and killed you because we tried to run. Another time when we tried to hide, he blew up a school. You blamed me and were angry. He, or one of his associates, strangled you on the roof. I can still feel how cold you were.”

“I’m here now, Ben,” she squeezed his hand. “I may not know everything about you, but we have time for that later.”

His plan threatened to bubble up his chest and spill out his mouth. He wanted her to realize how much that she should hate him for all of the times that she died because of the mistakes that he’d made or the times that was self-centred. She should see him for what he really was and not look at him with such caring eyes.

But the only thing he managed to say was: “I love you.”

“I love you too,” she said, then laughed lightly. “I like saying that.”

“I like hearing you say it.”

A sudden commotion from the other side of the hotel echoed through the building. A loud shout broke the relative calm of the restaurant. Instantly, they were on their feet, weapons drawn. They rounded the corner and he stopped for a half step. Anakin was yelling at the front desk clerk. His
eyes snapped in their direction and he glared at them before running off up the stairs.

“Is Kenobi still here?” He called as they ran by the front desk.

“No! He left!” He heard as he took the stairs two at a time to catch up with the man. Rey was behind him and he kept glancing at her, wary of other surprises. What was he doing there? Where was Quirin?

He checked the ballroom, sweeping the empty space. Nothing.

“Upstairs,” he motioned. “We go together.”

They couldn’t kill him now. The thought burnt through his mind. Quirin could be anywhere. If they killed him, they’d never find him. They’d have to catch him and hurt him to get the answer. His plan quickly changed; maybe they could do this. It could all end here.

Going up the stairs, he was focused on his thoughts when he heard Rey stumble behind him. He turned too late. Anakin had his arm around her throat, pointing a gun at her head.

He trained his weapon at the man’s head.

“Let her go, now.”

Anakin backed down the steps, as Rey tried to fight against him. He was taller, but weaker. He knew that the man might have some sort of ability not to age, but that didn’t mean he had super strength: he said he could die after all.

He backed Anakin up until they were in the ballroom. Anakin dug the gun into Rey’s throat and she stilled in his arms, her eyes on Kylo, telling him to pull the trigger.

“Not so fast, where’s the boy?” He said, noticing the look they were sharing. “You can’t go anywhere without him.”

“You said that you wouldn’t hurt her,” Kylo glared.

“Where’s the fun if I just can’t hurt her a little bit?”

Kylo was about to fire when Anakin shoved Rey away and shot him. Shot again in the same damned spot in the shoulder; he swore, temporarily stunned. Rey went for her gun and Anakin swung out, catching her in the back of the head. She rolled to the floor, dazed. Anakin knocked the gun out of his hand, and punched him hard in the wound. It knocked the wind out of him. Anakin reached down and grabbed her again, returning the gun to her head.

Grabbing his shoulder, finally coming back to himself, Kylo scanned the darkened ballroom floor for his gun. It wasn’t anywhere near him. Dammit. “Let her go, we had a deal.”

“I won’t kill her,” he smirked. His grip tightened and Kylo felt helpless as she kicked and clawed at the old man. “Settle down.”

He swept out the legs out from under her and pinned her to the floor, striking her twice in the face with the butt of the gun. Kylo let his emotions take over and tackled the man, despite his the pain in his shoulder. Anakin was still relatively strong, but at the same time too old and slower than he was. He pressed him into the floor until he felt the gun against his head.

“Let me go,” Anakin hissed, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth. “Or else the fun is over
Breathing deeply, he slid off the man. Anakin slowly got to his feet. He glanced over at Rey, who was holding her face and gradually getting to her knees.

“Well, this was fun,” he said, wiping his mouth. “I’ll see you both later then.”

He reached into his coat and the lights went out again. Kylo reached for Rey until he found her and saw the door open and close. He hugged her, making sure that she was alive. He felt her heart beating against his chest and didn’t want to let her go until he could see and Anakin was really gone.

“It’s okay,” he whispered. “You’re okay?”

“How did he get the jump on us?” Rey winced as he touched her face in the dark. The lights flickered on and he finally spotted his gun. He shook his head and angrily stood to reach for it.

“It doesn’t matter,” he slowly said, helping her to her feet. He checked her eye and her cut lip. How dare he do this to her? “He still has Quirin.”

She put her hands on his gunshot wound. “We need to stop the bleeding.”

He hissed as she pressed on it. “It’s fine.”

She glared at him. “No, it’s not.”

The door opened again and he turned, ready to shoot whoever was standing there. He was met with the shocked face of Ahsoka.

“What…what happened? We heard a shot,” she brought a hand to her mouth. “You’re bleeding, oh my God.”

“Can you get us a first aid kit? Quickly?” Rey asked, guiding Kylo’s gun down. “We have to go after him.”

The young woman nodded and dashed from the room. Rey put a steadying hand on his back and he shuddered.

“What do we do?”

He checked his watch. It was well after eight. “We have to go to that shack. He’s got a lead on us, he’s ahead of us, but if that’s where he has Quirin, we have to get there.”

“Without you bleeding to death,” she chided, leading him across the ballroom.

“He was going to shoot you,” he said, weakly.

“I…know. Thank you.”

Sitting in the same alcove from before, he let Ahsoka put temporary bandages on his shoulder. He just rolled his eyes. Rey held an icepack to her face, seeming to ignore her own injury because of her worry for him.

“You really need to go to the hospital,” Ahsoka said, shakily. “It went right through. This is so gross. Doesn’t it hurt?”
He wanted to shrug, but his shoulder was burning. He had to get beyond the pain and just shook his head. Ahsoka handed him some of the painkillers in the kit and he swallowed them without water. They wouldn’t do much, but it was something.

“It hurts a little.”

She put more tape on the wound and frowned even more. He finally shrugged on his shirt and suit coat and ignored how it ached when he moved.

“Are you okay?” He asked Rey.

She shook her head. “Well, I didn’t pass out. We need to go.”

He nodded. “Thanks, Ahsoka. Sorry for getting your benefit cancelled.”

“No, it’s…it’s okay,” she watched them in mild shock as they moved to go.

“Thanks for everything, really.” he gave her a sincere look. “You’re good at what you do. Keep doing it. And I like your lipstick.”

She just nodded and they left her in the alcove to return to their car. Rey kept the ice until they reached the vehicle, eventually casting it aside. Her eye wasn’t swollen shut, but there was a nasty red gash spreading across her temple. It would bruise into a nasty reminder of the old man. She touched her lip and sighed at the blood.

“Neither of us can drive,” she said, setting her hands on the car.

“But we have to,” he met her eyes. “This is it, Rey. We’re finally ending this.”

He noticed the note under his windshield wiper.

*Come to the place where YOU killed her.*

He crumpled up the paper and tossed it on the ground. Glaring at it, he got in the car. Anger was taking over as he gripped the steering wheel. Anakin had made him do that, but could still use it against him.

“Let’s go,” he said as she climbed in.

He drove through the evening, fighting the pain in his shoulder and the pressure on his chest. Every second that brought him closer to Anakin made his heart beat faster and he wasn’t sure how he was going to do this. Maybe he wouldn’t have to. Maybe together they could do it.

“It’s okay,” she said, almost reading his thoughts. “We’ll do it. It will be okay.”

He nodded, letting his tense hands loosen on the steering wheel. “I’m just mad that he hurt you.”

She frowned, reaching to touch his leg, bringing him back into the moment. “Be here with me now, okay? Focus.”

Sighing he glanced over at her, wincing at her eye. “That looks bad.”

“You were shot,” she replied, quickly. “I’ll get better. This day can’t go on much longer before it starts bleeding again.”

“I know,” he shook his head. “I hate getting shot.”
“Ben, I know that you want to save me,” she started and raised her hand when he was about to interrupt her. “But the most important thing is to stop this evil. If I get hurt, you need to keep going. Please. Stop telling yourself you’re not a good person. I’ve felt alone for so long and today, for the first time, I have felt cared for and loved. I want you to keep going, even if I die today.”

Her words echoed her letter and felt warm tears come to his eyes both at the look on her face and the memory of her dead on that day. He blinked, trying to focus on the road.

“You can’t die,” he shook his head. “I won’t let him kill you.”

He heard her exhale a couple of times, keeping her hand on his leg. “I love you.”

“I love you.”

He knew it wasn’t a goodbye, but it still felt like it. The drive into the night felt endless and it frustrated him. Anakin had taunted him by reminding him that he was at the same level as he was. He was the one who chose to kill her because of his own guilt and fear that he couldn’t watch her die in front of him again. He’d made that choice, not Anakin. Her blood was on his hands from all of the days that he chose not to let go.

The turn onto the dirt road made his body feel numb. There was no car. There were no lights on in the shack. He left the car halfway down the road, vigilant this time for attacks from all sides. It wasn’t as dark as before and they were alone. She scanned the grass and they made their way to the door, expecting the worst.

It was empty.

There was nothing, but a note rested in wait for him. Kylo swore. Wincing, he picked up the paper and nodded. _See you soon._ He looked up at Rey and shook his head. “I know where he is. This was just to distract us. Fucking bastard. He’s always fucking ahead of us and I keep falling for it.”

He angrily looked around the room, catching hints of the ghosts of Quirin and Rey around him. No more death here. He could almost feel the spirits of the other children, reaching for him. The grief in the building, along with his own bitter resentment towards himself, made him want to burn it down. He felt blood starting to seep through the bandages. It was getting harder to ignore how his arm tingled every time he moved it.

Outside the shack, he quickly pulled out his phone. Quirin wasn’t there. But he knew where he would go next. He wanted the chase. He wanted him to follow them back to the city. He wasn’t here, dead, that was the main thing. Anakin had kept this part of his word.

Rey tapped his arm. “Ben, we have to go. I’ll get the car.”

He nodded. “I need…I need to catch my breath. No one’s here, he’s alone and needs the boy. Run.”

She kissed him on the cheek and made for their car. It was time. The day had gone by too quickly. Night had settled around them and the wind chilled his weakened body. He hadn’t had a chance to really talk to his mother earlier. She needed this. He dialed Leia’s number with shaking hands. He needed to say goodbye. His father didn’t do that, but he had to do this for her. They only two hours left of this goddamned day.

“Ben? Oh thank God,” his mother answered on one ring. “Where’s Anakin? Do you have the boy?”
“No, mom,” he felt tears start to sting his eyes. The wind and the night spread endlessly around him. He’d done enough today. In the dark, outside the shack, he looked up at the stars that he couldn’t see in the city. “But we’re going to save him…mom…I have to do it. I have to give him what he wants. He…I can’t let him hurt more people.”

“No! Ben, find another way. Don’t…don’t leave me alone,” his mother sobbed and he heard her sit down heavily. He imagined her in her apartment’s kitchen, not their old home. He just wanted to go home, but that place didn’t exist anymore.

“Mom, mom,” his voice shook and he didn’t recognise himself. “I’m so sorry. This day has been so long and I’m just…tired. Tired of dying, tired of seeing death. What I’ve done to Rey…she needs someone better than me. I’ve been…I haven’t been doing my job as a police officer or as your son, or as her partner. This is something I have to do. He won’t stop.”

“Ben, shh. You’re a good cop and a good son. But there has to be another way. Please. Your father couldn’t find a way, but you can.”

He shook his head, wiping dully at his eyes. “There’s no other way. Rey’s coming. I have to go. I love you.”

He hung up and tossed the phone aside. He didn’t need it anymore. He scrubbed his face and tried to look neutral. Rey would try to stop him if she knew.

He got in the passenger side and nodded at her. “Let’s go end this. He’s at the Cathedral, St Pat’s. He’s wanted me to come there the entire time; I’ve messed it up again.”

She drove into the city, and he focused on being in that moment. Anakin wanted to end this and he had kept him waiting. There were no words. There were just the sounds of their breathing. He was beside her and, despite her injuries, she was driving with a firm determination. He reached for her hand to squeeze it, then returned to his thoughts. It was another day that she’d been hurt, but also had been loved. He knew what he had to do.

It was time. The city unfolded around them and he turned away from her to fight back tears. They hadn’t said a word in their final hour together. He felt a numb sadness when she noticed that she’d lost her phone at some point, as they were parking. They left the car a block from the looming cathedral. Rey kept looking at him, waiting for him to say something and make a plan, but he was silently focused on confronting the man.

“Should I go in the back?” She whispered as they walked up the front steps, feet hollow on the cold concrete. He shook his head, taking out his weapon. She matched him, nodding at him to lead the way.

“We go in together. We’ll plan in the gift shop, off to the side,” his grabbed the large handle to the door. “We have to stop him, Rey.”

“We will. I love you, Ben,” she said, wiping at her face. She was dealing with a great deal of pain, but just kept going. He wanted to ignore his own deep ache, but it was a reminder that he was still alive for now.

They ducked into the church, noticing Anakin standing across the dully-lit expanse. He’d been waiting for them. This was going to end and he’d done everything he had to. There was only one thing left.

He couldn’t breathe as he pushed her towards the small gift-shop annex. The familiar steps from so
many weeks ago caught in his mind. Stealing a glimpse of that man standing at the far end of the church, his arm wrapped around Quirin with a gun to his head, made his chest heavy. He couldn’t let it end with Quirin or Rey dead. They were going to be safe. This was it. He’d made his mind up that morning and now it was time to carry out his plan. The guilt and pain, all of it; they would be free of him. He had brought this pain to them, and he could take it away.

“So, we go in, come on Ben,” Rey was taking deep breaths. “We have to stop him before he hurts Quirin.”

Kylo shook his head and she looked at him with a small frown. He pulled her into a desperate and rough embrace, kissing her frantically. She resisted, still wanting to keep moving. He couldn’t let her. He pushed her against the wall of the gift shop and met her eyes.

“I love you, but I can’t let you come with me this time.”

“Ben, please. We can do it together.”

“No, Rey, no. He wants me. I need to do this to save you.”

Her bleeding lip quivered. “No.”

“I’m sorry, love.”

There was only one way. Before she could react, he cuffed her to the bench, fastened to the wall. She looked at him in rage as he stepped away, tugging frantically at the handcuffs.

“Ben! Please. No!”

He took one last look at her and shook his head. “Don’t forget that I love you. And always will. Today, tomorrow, forever. I can’t come back for you again. Have a tomorrow, Rey. For me.”

He turned away as she screamed at him to come back. He shut the door to the room and stepped down the steps to the aisle of the church. The air felt thick, smelling of burnt wax and incense. Candles illuminated the interior, filling the room with a deep glow. He could still hear Rey struggling and had to shake her from his mind. Ghost images of her passed through his mind. He was going to save this one for all the others he’d let die. His arm ached and he had to push back the tears at what he was about to do. He wasn’t giving up, but giving in. He’d made up his mind; he had to choose her and her life, even though he was not going to be a part of it.

Standing at the altar, was his grandfather. Quirin stood in front of him, crying silently.

He set his gun on the back pew and took off his suit coat and set it beside it. His shoes echoed as he approached, steadying his back at the evil that stood before him.

“Let him go.”

“Ah, so you’re finally here, that’s very good, Ben.” Anakin smiled and then sneered. “It took you long enough.” He tapped Quirin on the shoulder. “Go on now, boy. Go say goodbye to your dear friend.”

Quirin looked up, surprised, and then ran down the aisle of the massive cathedral. Kylo knelt down, wrapping his arms around him, no matter how much it hurt.

“I’m so sorry, Kylo, I didn’t do a good job,” he sobbed. “He’s going to kill you.”
“Shh, Quirin, shh it’s okay. I need to do this. I’m a police officer and I’m going to protect everyone right now. It’s my job,” he hugged the boy again. “Quirin, remember what I told you this morning? I have one more thing to ask, okay?”

“Yes,” the boy pouted, still glancing over his shoulder at the figure that loomed in the background. He shuddered; he must be remembering all of the times that the man had killed him. But this was the last today. He’d made that promise and he was going to keep it.

“This is a key to my handcuffs. I need you to go to Detective Rey and sit with her. She’s in that room over there, do you see it? She’s going to be very, very sad right now, so I need you to take care of her. Quirin, when you hear a shot, a loud bang, I want you to give her the key. Not before that. Okay? Then I want you two to run.”

The boy nodded, taking the key. “But why, Kylo, why can’t you come with us?”

“It can’t be today forever. You need to grow up. You need to get big and go to school and do everything in the world. And Rey…she needs to be happy again, with someone else. I’ve caused her so much pain and she deserves someone better,” he gave the boy one last hug and then pushed him on. “Go, quickly.”

Facing Anakin, he heard the boy’s footsteps, then the opening and closing of the gift-shop door. Quiet descended upon them, broken by the older man clearing his throat.

“So, we’re finally here and this day will finally end,” Anakin took a few long strides to sit down in the first pew. “Come sit with me. We have some things to discuss.”

His hands balled into fists, but he still complied, moving stiffly down the aisle. The man looked older—his face more lined—in the dull light of the candles. The heat made his hollow cheeks redden. Being near the man who had caused all this pain and horror and killed his father made him almost lose his determination.

“I thought you were a better detective. I gave you all of the clues on that first day, you remember, and it took you so long to figure them out,” he said, looking up at the ornate altar.

“They weren’t very good clues,” he snapped, then steadied his voice. “But I’m here now to do what you want. I want to end this day and save them.”

“So you finally understand the first clue?”

“The choice between her and him…” he frowned. “The him is me.”

“Yes! Now you get it!” Anakin clapped his hands together. “I have what I need from Palpatine and Kenobi, I will ruin them. They took the only light in my life and I finally have what I’ve wanted after all of these years. Killing them wouldn’t be good enough. I had all of that a week ago, so what I need now is for you to end this.”

“But there will be others again,” Kylo realized, dread spreading throughout his body.

Anakin shook his head. “I’ve had my revenge for what they did to Padmé. I couldn’t bring her back in the loop. But now, everyone will finally respect me and what I’m capable of. I have the power over life and death and they will know what her death finally means.”

Wrong, Kylo thought, resisting a smirk. He’d stopped that. He’d made them remember. The old fool didn’t know that yet. He’d beaten him.
“If I do this,” Kylo started. “You have to promise not to hurt them.”

“Your dear partner and the boy?” Anakin shrugged. “That’s a risk that you will have to take. That’s part of what makes accepting your death much more complicated. We all deal with unknowns at the moment of death. I’ve seen so many lives snuffed out and when they really accept their death, it doesn’t matter. Who will take care of them? Who will empty my apartment? Who will organise my funeral? You think it will be about them, but it all turns into what will happen to yourself and who will remember you. We are all selfish when accepting death. That’s what makes the loop work so well for me; so many fewer unknowns. If I die, it will be broken. But I have already taken care of everything, so it will still be set in motion. But I made the promise to your father and I kept it, until now. I can make you the same deal. Seeing you die, after how much frustration you’ve caused me, will put an end to the Skywalkers. Your silly girl and that boy will live. Now, enough talk. Have you made peace with this world? Are you ready to die, like your father?”

He looked up at the altar and took a deep breath. Quirin would give her the key and she knew to run. They would be able to get away and could run from him. If he wasn’t there to bring them down, they would be free. Sadly, Kylo nodded.

“Then let’s get this over with, so I can meet tomorrow and bask in this revenge against everyone that’s tormented me. Your uncle, your mother, Kenobi, Palpatine and especially you.”

Resting on his knees before the altar, Kylo took a deep and steadying breath, trying to clear his mind. He heard his grandfather cocking his gun, humming as he moved.

“I am glad that we got to bond,” he shook his head. “The children were getting a little boring. Now, look up at me so I can believe that you’re ready to die. Or else we’ll all wake up and it will be today again and I really don’t think you have that much time left being whole. You really should have been more careful. If you’re gone then there really be no one to protect them. And I really don’t want to be in this day any longer. I will never stop hurting them if you truly don’t give in.”

Kylo shut his eyes, feeling warm tears slip down his cheeks. This day had been so long. He’d seen so much death, but also life. He felt loved and she knew that he loved her. Rey needed to live. She was a shining light, smart and capable. She deserved someone who wouldn’t manipulate her in the ways that he had. He had hurt her uncountable times. She wouldn’t remember their beautiful days, but she wouldn’t have to remember all the pain that she had been through. This was the only day that she would know with him and he could die knowing that. She needed to live a long life and not deal with someone who could only look at her and remember her dead or broken. Dying for her was dying without regrets. His grandfather was wrong; he didn’t feel selfish losing his life for her future. He focused on her face, smiling up at him at their City Hall wedding and imagined her looking at someone else with those emotions, with real love. Their love had only been meant for today. Her tomorrow was something he wouldn’t regret.

He opened his eyes and looked up. “I’m ready.”

Anakin raised the gun. “Then goodbye, Ben Solo.”

He closed his eyes and tried to still his thundering heart.

He steadied his shoulders and let his mind go blank.

“Not today, asshole!”

The sudden shout was followed by an equally quick shot. Anakin dropped, a bullet hole bleeding
from his forehead. He felt a sudden burst in his chest, like an invisible band had been broken and he couldn’t breathe. He felt winded, keeping his eyes on Anakin until he could finally see straight again.

Kylo looked up.

Standing in the aisle, barefoot, was Rey, the handcuffs still hanging off of one of her wrists. He scrambled to his feet and ran to her, instantly feeling her arms around him after the few short and panicked strides. He cried, kissed her, and pulled her closer.

“That was so, so stupid,” he mumbled into her shoulder.

“You’re the one who’s stupid,” she shook her head, pulling back and kissing him again. “I wasn’t going to let you die, you idiot.”

She lightly touched his bleeding nose and frowned. The bond between them all had been broken, tearing the loop and what joined them together asunder with his death.

Quirin came out from behind a pew, gazing over at the dead man at the altar. He motioned the boy to come forward so he could hug him. He saw blood dripping from the boy’s nose and knew that he’d felt it too. Rey’s arms came around the both of them and they stood, shaking in the quiet emptiness of the cathedral. His heart hurt as he held them both; she couldn’t let him go either. He sobbed, pressing his head to her shoulder again.

Glancing over, he took one last look at the fallen man. Blood pooled behind his head and his eyes stared open and lifeless, faded from the yellow to a cold black. All of this had been about not being able to let go. Rey eventually shook his arm to move, pressing a tissue to Quirin’s nose. He slowly looked at her and saw how bruised she was from earlier. She kissed his cheek and he took her hand. He turned away from the dead man and towards what he had been promised: a tomorrow.

They walked outside, hand in hand with Quirin between them. The night air hit him in a rush and he felt his body stiffen. He was still swimming in the daze of what happened moments ago. Rey helped him sit down, guiding him to the top step. Quirin practically climbed onto his lap, still holding the tissue to his nose, and Rey leaned against him on the other side, reaching for his hand. Sitting on front steps, he looked up at the sky, where the stars should be.

He could only hear their breathing. The city was silent for once.

There was no more planning, no more running, but his shoulders still wouldn’t relax.

They weren’t alone for long. A passing pedestrian looked up at the two people, clearly beaten and bleeding with a small, shivering child and jogged up the steps to them.

“Are you okay?” He asked. He peered inside the open church door. “What’s going on in there?”

“Can I borrow your phone?” Kylo asked. “We’re...we’re NYPD detectives. We...just got the child murderer.”

“What? Holy shit, yeah of course.” He fumbled into his pocket and Kylo felt the pressure of the day start to lift. He dialed the captain at home, making the call that he had longed to make since all of this began, back in the days that weren’t today.

“Captain? We got him.”

The words didn’t make him feel as satisfied as he thought that they would, but it was still
something.

“Ren? What? Where are you?”

He glanced over his shoulder, up at the spire of the cathedral. “St Pat’s. He’s dead. We got the last boy and he’s dead.”

The captain took a long and pleased breath. “We…we’ll be there soon. Good job.”

He blinked at the words. There was nothing good about this. Exhaling, he handed the phone back to the stranger. “Thanks.”

The man frowned at them, peering into the church. “Are you okay?”

He glanced at Rey and exhaled. “It’s been…a long day.”

The man shook his head and started to walk away. Alone, he held onto Rey and Quirin, just absorbing the silence. Rey pulled Quirin closer and he slowly stopped shivering. He let the tissue fall away, rubbing his nose with his sleeve to look at it. She took small glances at Kylo, but didn’t say anything. The minutes passed and, finally, he heard distant sirens start to break the quiet. As blue and red lights filled the night around them, he pulled both of them closer. They’d be taken from him soon.

“Is it really over?” Quirin asked. “Can I go home now?”

“Yeah, buddy, soon,” Kylo said. “You…why did you give her the key? Quirin, that could have been dangerous.”

The boy looked guilty. “She promised me that you guys would take me to Legoland if I gave her the key.”

“Legoland? Really?” Kylo shot Rey a look and she glanced away. “Well, a promise is a promise.”

The captain and Mundi and the others, Dameron included, climbed out of the surrounding cars. Most of them were half dressed or in their normal work clothes, not having slept. He spotted the forensics tech and gave him a small nod. The man returned the look, speaking to his assistant. She was fine; they both were. But there were still echoes of earlier deaths surrounding the people that were alive today. He wasn’t sure if he’d ever be able to look at the people around him without seeing them as dead. They’d talk later. He liked the man and looked forward to being a better colleague.

Two maybe three ambulances and a fire truck also pulled up, filling the night with sound and light. Numbness took over at that point, and he was not sure what was all really happening; the only things keeping him grounded were holding Rey and the boy. The dull ringing in his ears from the gunshots slowly faded and he could finally clearly hear the sounds of the crowd around them. The strange feeling in his chest felt like something inside of him that had always been there was missing, but was suddenly been filled with love and joy from all angles.

Tekka took in what he saw as the others ran into the church, weapons drawn. But that evil was dead. He was just what was left of the shell of the man who’d drove himself to darkness and nearly took Kylo along with him.

“What…what happened here? Where have you two been?”

Kylo just shook his head. “It will…it will all be in the report, sir.”
An EMT draped shock blankets around them and started checking their eyes for head injuries. They noticed his wound and Rey’s bruised face and started to force them down the stairs to the waiting medical care. Rey kept Quirin close as they took the long steps down to the street. They let them all sit in the same ambulance after Quirin refused to leave their side. One EMT quickly looked over the boy and, after wiping his face, said he was okay, tugging the blanket tighter around him. He sat on the edge of the ambulance steps, looking around at all of the cop cars with excited eyes. The EMT was softly asking him questions that Kylo couldn’t hear. Would Quirin ever be okay? Would he just be able to forget all this?

“How many times have you been shot here, detective? And these look like old wounds,” the other EMT asked, removing his shirt. “There’s a lot of scar tissue but it looks…weird.”

“Yeah, a few times,” he hissed at the pain. That woke him up a little. It would feel good not to get shot again. His body needed time to heal, but his mind was what he was most worried about.

“It looks like it went straight through,” the other man sighed. “But we still need to patch you up at the hospital. You’ve lost a lot of blood, running around all night.”

Rey held an icepack to her face, looking up from the other EMT. “She thinks that he might have fractured my orbital bone.”

Kylo nodded at them both. “We…I want to wait for Quirin’s parents. Can you call them?”

“Do you have the number?” He asked, pulling out his phone.

He recited the digits that had stuck with him over the last few weeks. He heard Kristina’s happy cries through the air from the EMT’s phone. He moved out of the ambulance to walk around and talk to her, before handing the phone to Quirin. Rey moved to sit next to him on the ambulance bed, taking his hand.

“Hey.”

“Hi.”

Rey kissed him lightly on the cheek, before leaning in to whisper. “It’s 12.01.”

His head slumped on her shoulder. “It’s over.”

“It’s over,” she rested her head against him. “I’m still mad at what you were about to do.”

“I know.”

He took her hand and traced a small circle with his thumb. “Rey, I…”

“Shh. We’ll talk about this later. Just…just say that you’ll never do something like that again,” she moved her head, forcing him to look at her. “Don’t ever leave me behind again.”

He kissed her lightly. “Never. I love you.”

She smiled and kissed him again. “I love you too.”

The captain returned, frowning and shaking his head, and he spotted them wheeling the body, draped in white, to another ambulance across from them. There would be so many questions and he wasn’t sure how to answer them right now. Their crime scene was a church and that would be hard to explain.
Tekka stepped into the ambulance and gave them a serious look. “Go to the hospital, and then go home and rest for a day or two. I…the DA has so many questions and I do too. But you got him. All of the evidence makes him being dead easier to explain. The media are here and I’ll…I’ll have to tell them that it was you two. But you’ve earned a day off, or maybe more. Hell, take a week off. And then, I need you back at work to unravel all of this.”

They nodded and the captain stepped down, stopping to talk to Quirin briefly before walking away to the crowd of reporters that had appeared at the fringe of the chaos. Quirin, realizing they were alone, climbed up to sit with them. Squeezing between them, he yawned.

“Do I have to go back to school now?”

“Maybe not tomorrow, but soon,” Rey answered, stroking his hair.

“Will you come visit me?” Quirin asked, looking mostly at Kylo.

He nodded. “Of course. We’re going to Legoland.”

“Cool!”

He finally realized that Quirin would deal with all of this better than he could. He was young and it would just be another memory, along with a new cousin he could call and talk to. They were tied together now, and no longer a part of Anakin; he would have to be there for him in a way that his grandfather chose not to. The boy had fallen asleep by the time his parents had arrived. Kylo spotted them ducking under the police tape that had encircled the cathedral. Kristina, her face red from crying, noticed the open ambulance door and ran up, her husband quickly following behind her.

“Oh, god, Quirin!”

Hearing his mother’s voice, the boy stirred. “Mom!”

He climbed down from between them to hug his parents who swept him off of the edge of the ambulance in welcoming arms. Mats look up from his son to the beaten and bloodied pair and nodded.

“Is he okay? Can we take him home?” He asked.

Kylo nodded. “We’ll be by in the next few days with some questions.”

“Thank you, detectives. Thank you for saving our boy.” Kristina sobbed. She gave him one more glance over her shoulder. They would have a lot to talk about when he was feeling better.

They watched the family walk away and Kylo finally closed his eyes, just wanting to sleep. He zoned out, following Rey and the directions of those around him. The rest of the late night was a repeat of previous trips — going to the hospital, getting stitched up, but this time with fewer drugs. Rey got a quick examination and the OK to go home. Somewhere, in the back of his mind, he knew he needed to talk to the others, Finn, Poe, Rose, Maz, Yoda, Luke and Leia, but he was too tired. People who he had met today, but also on other todays, needed to know. Tomorrow. They could do it tomorrow.

The world was slightly blurry by the time they took the cab back to his apartment. He was starting to question if this was all a dream. Another part of him wondered if he had actually died and he would always be stuck in the loop, forever doomed to watch her die for his sins. He understood his grandfather in some small, horrible way; he’d always choose her. Maybe he should have died.
There was always the chance that this might start again and he wouldn’t know what to do. His shirt was stiff from blood and he just stared at it, feeling empty.

After the slow elevator ride up to his apartment, Rey helped him out of his clothes, pushing him towards the bed. She removed her clothes and grabbed something from his closet and slipped into bed beside him.

“Don’t leave,” he whispered kissing her hair.

“I won’t.”

She leaned up, kissing him goodnight. He rubbed her back and let his mind drift. Maybe this hadn’t happened. Maybe he was dead after all. He felt her hands run through his hair and a soft kiss on his temple.

His eyes fluttered shut as the clock turned over to 1.59.
Day 25

With a shiver and a jolt, Kylo Ren awoke when his alarm starting to chime at 5.59 a.m. He sat for a minute of sheer fear at hearing the beeping. His teeth clenched and warm tears formed at the corner of his eyes. He felt the same as the first day; the light from the sun, the sound of his alarm. Cringing, he prepared for the usual news broadcast to begin: *It's Tuesday, September 24 at...*

“Good morning on this Wednesday, September 25th at 6 a.m. You’re listening to New York News 580. The temperature is 68 and cloudy. Today, New York is commending the work of our city’s finest. Two hero detectives, Kylo Ren and Rey Niima are being celebrated..."

He sat up, harshly throwing his hand to his side and turned to the radio.

“Ow, Ben that hurt.”

His head snapped to his side. *Rey.*

“Rey?”

“And why is your alarm so early?” She reluctantly sat up, rubbing her bare leg. She was in his bed, wearing one of his t-shirts as pyjamas. Her hair was mussed and she had a slightly swollen lip and black eye. But she was there, in one piece. She looked at him with mock annoyance. “Turn it off, I want to sleep.”

She flopped back down and he touched his chest. He wasn’t wearing the clothes from yesterday. He was bare chested, only in his boxers. He had a bandage on his shoulder and it hurt to move: actual pain, not just ghost pain. Shot again in the same damned spot. But they were new feelings. New clothes. *Her.*

“Rey??”

“Hmm?” She sleepily responded, stroking his good arm.

“It’s tomorrow.”

“What?”

“It’s not today. It’s tomorrow.”

He turned, leaning down to kiss her deeply, stretching out over her body and hugging her, trying
not to put pressure on his arm. The pain was almost behind him. She slowly started to respond, after the initial shock. He looked down at her, pinned under his form.

“We did it. We got him.”

She smiled reaching up to stroke his hair. “Yes, I know, I was there. And I’m still mad at you. But now I’m very, very tired and very sore. Stop kissing me and go back to sleep.”

“I never want to stop kissing you.”

His hand found it’s way up her shirt, cupping her bare breast and breathing a long, contented sigh as he kissed her again. It was tomorrow. She giggled, slightly, pushing at him.

“I love you,” he said again.

“I know…” she said. “And I’m…I love you too, but I need some time to get used to it. Give me a couple of weeks. Now, can you let me sleep? It was a long day.”

He slowly kissed her again and then curled up to spoon her on his good side, absorbing the feeling of the new day. The memories from all of the previous days — all twenty-four damned, long, heart-breaking, terrorizing days came flooding back and hit him in the chest, filling the spot where the bond with Anakin had been broken. Holding her bleeding the first day; that’s where this all started. Watching him stab her, throw her, burn them, the car accident, the darkest day, all of it. The memories brought on tears that he didn’t think he had left. Losing her all of those days had pushed him to the edge so many times and she was always able to pull him back. She saved him. Now, they had a tomorrow together.

She dozed lightly as he held her, not wanting to let go. For her, the only other yesterday would be that one, the one where she lived and he was some sort of hero. He winced at the call he had to make to his mother, as well as the pain in his shoulder, but that would come later. They caught the madman and broke the loop. They also found the man who was responsible for his father’s death and got retribution for him. Quirin was alive, but the other children were still gone. The pained looks of all of the parents flashed before his eyes, like the endless ghosts that preoccupied his thoughts. Would this help them in any way? He wasn’t able to sleep, still running through the days. He kissed her neck and hair and slowly removed his arm. Pulling on a robe, he left the bedroom.

He was making coffee when she wandered into the kitchen.

“It’s so unfair that you woke me up.”

He handed her a cup and smiled. “We’ll take a nap this afternoon.”

She hugged him, careful of his shoulder. “Ben, I still don’t understand everything that happened yesterday and I don’t think I ever will.”

“I…I don’t think I will either,” he shook his head. “But it’s over. I never thought it would end.”

She nodded, moving away. “So what are we going to do today?”

“Anything, everything,” He absorbed the feeling of a different sky rolling outside his window. “You like the beach.”

“I do like the beach,” she smiled. “We can go to the beach.”
He was pouring himself a cup of coffee when she called to him.

“Ben?”

“Yeah?”

“Why’s there a crow nesting on your balcony?”

Chapter End Notes

I honestly can't thank you ALL for your comments and kudos. This all started when an idea hit me in the middle of the night and I couldn't sleep: Kylo and Rey in a time loop and her dying every day. I apologize for the typos and mistakes in grammar, as well as when the plot felt rushed or jumbled or I made some error by getting the days mixed up, because I wrote a lot of this quickly, just to get the ideas out of my head. I will be going through and editing this. In the future (once I'm done teaching my course and going back to my research), I will be making this into an e-book of this version (with an unwritten bonus chapter that I deleted when this all started to get too long and out of hand). Then I might rework it into a REAL book (a guy I know has an agent, so who knows). Sorry for jerking around with the chapter count. I got ahead of myself, as I always do, hehe.

As promised, here's my Spotify playlist. I couldn't find some of the songs from my iTunes, but this has some of the inspiration for all of this...thing: https://open.spotify.com/user/slpasay/playlist/3axTriYLwX4teX9aHEhkXQ?si=46PLi2voQgWt89NEyao5cw

Some other notes.

Ways I wanted to kill Rey (out of my twisted mind): thrown under a train, hit by a bus, decapitated, tornado (somehow...).

Other bonus goodies: The cab driver would also be the same. I planned on introducing him as Lando, but left that out, because this is pretty meta as it is; the priest in the church on one of the days was a red herring. I initially wanted him to be Anakin but that was going down creepy, illuminati territory and Dan Brown so I dropped that. Macht-Vis is German and Latin, both for Force. Some one mentioned making Kenobi related to Rey and I could have worked that in there, but it again was getting too meta and tied together. I wrote the chapter with the Dream Han in advance of the Darkest Day so I needed to rework that. I still don't think it matches the tone after I added that part.

I'm adding one more chapter after this: the alternate ending. It might grow into a one-off continuation, if I finally do some real work on other things. Thanks for all of the recs that I've seen. You're beautiful and wonderful readers. Sorry for the tears and the heartache.
If you want to find me on social media, my twitter is https://twitter.com/shistorian and my tumblr is http://raevfitta.tumblr.com/ I welcome all comments and questions. Y'all keep me alive!

Peace and love!
Sarah
Alternate Ending: A New Day.

Chapter Summary

Because I can't leave anything alone, here's an alternate ending.

Seven Years Later

Rey returned home to her apartment with bleary eyes just before 6 a.m., stepping inside and closing the door as quietly as she could. The boys on the couch still stirred when she put her bag down on the chair by the door. The over-night shift had taken a lot out of her, but she still smiled at the faces that greeted her.

“Mommy!” Her son called, slipping out from under the blanket to run to her.

“Hi Benny,” She hugged him, mildly annoyed that he wasn’t in his pyjamas. “Quirin, I told you not to let him sleep on the couch again.”

Quirin blinked awake and sat up. He looked more like an adult with every day, but still reminded her of the little boy who loved Legos when he woke up.

“I’m sorry, Rey,” he stood up. “But he brushed his teeth this time. And we only had a little candy.”

Normally Leia would stay with her grandson when Rey had to work the night shift, but she had to go out of town the last week. She had sounded guilty over the phone and promised to take Ben to school today when she got back. Rey had been confused when she insisted on coming by that day, but always accepted the help. Now that the night shifts were over, Rey would have some time off. She looked forward to sleeping once the boys went to school. But first, breakfast.

“Qui, can you help me? Leia will be here in an hour to take him to school,” she started taking out the cereal and milk and setting it on the counter.

“Okay, Mrs Solo.”

Rey nearly dropped the bowl she was holding and gave him a firm look. “Quirin. I’m tired. Don’t call me that.”

Quirin dropped his gaze to the counter. “I’m sorry Rey. It’s just…it’s today. It’s September 24th.”

Steadying her hands on the counter, Rey felt a deep pain flow through her. She’d forgotten. How could she forget? Putting her head in her hand, she felt tears coming to her eyes. Quirin touched her shoulder and she turned to embrace him.

How could she have forgotten the day that Ben died?

Her son had been playing with her bag, absently entertained by something in his imagination, but heard her sob and ran over.
“What’s wrong, mommy?” He asked. Ben was six years old now and slowly losing his baby fat. He looked so much like his father that Rey felt like he was still there.

“Come here, sweetheart,” she reached for him. “It’s Daddy’s Day. I just… It slipped my mind. That’s why grandma is coming by to take you to school.”

“If it’s Daddy’s Day, I don’t want to go to school,” the boy pouted, hugging her leg.

Quirin let her go and lifted up the boy. Quirin had really stepped up in the last few years, taking on more and more babysitting tasks and basically living on her couch. Leia had given her Ben’s apartment, insisting that it was a way to get to know him after he died. Rey had felt shaken by everything that had happen and accepted the offer in the end. Even after seven years, everything here still felt like his. His clothes were still there, waiting for him to come home. She knew it wasn’t good for their son to live with that hope, but it made her feel better and she could be selfish at times too.

Being a single mother and a cop, she took the parts that she could.

Quirin eventually stepped away and helped Ben with his breakfast, pouring more cereal than sugar this time, since she told him to stop filling her son with too much junk. Quirin even set on the coffee maker for her and she touched his arm. She couldn’t believe how much time had passed. And it hurt her that she’d forgotten what day it was. Her new partner was younger than she was, and that made her feel old. She felt like he was never going to figure it out. She felt her inner Kylo stir every time the man went by her desk. Mundi had even started calling her Kylo when she got that look on her face and she could only glare it him.

Quirin placed a mug in her hand and gave her a small smile. “I’m sorry, Rey. I miss him too.”

She gave him another hug before he sat down and started to eat cereal and talk with her son about what happened on Daddy’s Day. Ben was old enough now to start remembering what the teenager was telling him. But every year and every day brought them further apart.

Rey turned away, pretending to look at her mail as she felt tears come to her eyes.

She remembered that night with bitterness, but also heartache. She put herself back in the gift shop of the cathedral, fighting against the cuffs. Quirin was biting his lip, torn between what Ben had told him and what Rey was trying to say. When the gunshot echoed through the cathedral, the boy had screamed, clutching at his chest. Blood started spilling down his face from his and he was gasping. Rey had to fight through her tears to get him to crawl to her and give her the key. She undid the cuffs and grabbed him as he passed out.

When she was outside the gift shop, she looked down the long aisle. Ben lay there, dead. Across from him were empty black clothes. She turned away and wept, holding Quirin and crying on the front steps.

She had been given a month off after his funeral.

She moved into his apartment after two weeks.

Then she started feeling sick every morning.

And then there was Ben, the son who his father would never meet.

She had her friends and Leia and Luke, but all she wanted was her partner back. One day was not enough.
“Hey, Rey, I have to run, I have calculus at 8 a.m. I hate high school,” Quirin brushed by her, putting his bowl in the sink. “Can we…can we hang out tonight? Just talk about Kylo and get a pizza or something?”

She hugged him again. “Of course, Qui. I have some time off now. Maybe we can take a road trip this weekend, after we talk to your mom.”

The teenager’s eyes lit up. “That would be so cool. I’m…I’m sorry for calling you that before. It just…I wanted to remember for a bit.”

“It’s fine, really,” she smiled as best she could. “You knew him better than I did. I want to hear the stories again.”

He touched her arm, almost in the way that Ben had done. Quirin had grown up almost normal, losing all of the emotions of the dark days that haunted him over time, replacing it with memories instead. He was doing well in school, played soccer and tennis, and still helped with her son as often as he could. She looked forward to seeing him graduate and go to college. She was trying to convince him not to go to the academy, but he was determined to follow in his hero’s footsteps.

Quirin bent down to hug Ben and whisper in his ear. The younger boy nodded and said I promise a little too loud. Quirin avoided her eyes, grabbed his school bag and was out the door before she could ask what they were whispering about. Whatever it was, it was not good.

Frowning, she sat down across from her son. He pretended to be very interested in the milk left in his cereal bowl when she cleared her throat.

“What was that?”

“I don’t know,” he shrugged. “When’s grandma getting here?”

“Benjamin Han Solo, don’t you change the subject. No lies on Daddy’s Day.”

The boy looked down and frowned. He looked so much like his father that it tore through her, almost like the bullet that had killed him.

“Promise you won’t get mad,” he said, finally looking up.

She bit her lip. This was going to be bad.

“What did you two do yesterday?” She asked, trying to lighten her tone. He wouldn’t tell her if she looked prepared to be angry with him.

“Qui and me played PlayStation, but then it got boring because he kept winning. Then we did homework and it was even more boring,” he rolled his eyes, being dramatic. “But then Q and me played this other game. It’s really cool but it’s…it’s a secret,” he looked away again. “I don’t want him to be in trouble.”

“Ben, what’s the game?” she clenched her fist under the table. “I promise that Quirin won’t be in trouble. Neither of you are in trouble. Just tell me the game, okay?”

He turned, meeting her look with his big brown eyes. “Mommy, I saw daddy.”

She dug her nails into her hand. “Ben, don’t joke about that. It hurts me.”

“No, no,” he shook his head. “Quirin showed me how to do it. He misses daddy too so he saw
him in the today.”

He held up his finger, covered in a bandage adorned with stars.

“That’s how we do it,” he said, almost proudly. “Quirin and me, we touch blood and it hurts for a bit, but it doesn’t hurt that much. And we go to see daddy. He gave me a big hug and said that he misses you and that he loves you. Today, tomorrow, and forever.”

Tears came to her eyes and she couldn’t blink them away. He even sounded like him.

“Don’t cry, mommy,” he hopped off his chair and hugged her. “It was ‘posed to make you happy. He said that he’s sorry for what he did. And that he never got to meet me, but guess what mommy?”

She could only nod, afraid that if she opened her mouth, she would sob and she didn’t want their son to see her like that.

“Mommy, Quirin thinks that we can save daddy! In the today. If we go there again, we can find the bad man who hurt you and daddy and Quirin and, then we’ll be a family. Wouldn’t that be cool? If me and Q can play the game again…”

“No,” she said. “Benjamin, I swear, don’t play that game. It’s dangerous and it scares me.”

She wiped at her eyes as he took a step back.

“I’m sorry,” she saw tears welling in his eyes. “Daddy said you’d be sad if I told you.”

She stood. “Let’s talk more about daddy later, okay? You need to get changed and go to school. Grandma will be here soon. Don’t tell her about the game, okay? I’m going to talk to Quirin about this tonight and I won’t be mad. I promise. We’re going to have pizza and talk about daddy.”

“Ohkay,” he finally said, giving her a hug before running off to his room.

She felt like her legs were shaking as she stood. She tried to walk normally as she helped him put on a fresh t-shirt and pants and then forced him to wash his face and brush his teeth. It was in these simple morning routine moments that she felt the most alone. Ben would never get to have these memories of his son.

Leia let herself in, just in time. Ben ran and hugged his grandma and Leia looked at him with heavy eyes.

“How was the sleepover last night?” She gestured to the blankets and half pillow fort that the boys had built.

Rey shook her head, hugging her mother-in-law. “They got up to something.”

Leia hugged her back and Rey felt a quiet sob escape her lips.

“I forgot this morning,” she said. “I can’t believe I forgot.”

“Shh, Rey, it’s okay. It’s been so long. I’m going to take him to school and I’ll call you later. Get some rest,” she answered, before slowly pulling away. “All right, Benny Boy, get your shoes on and say goodbye to your mom.”

“Bye mom!” He hugged her legs and she handed him his jacket. He waved as they left.
“Have a good day, sweetheart,” she managed to say as the door slammed shut. She looked the door behind them and sighed. She was alone with her thoughts and that was the last thing that she wanted on this day. Crossing her arms around her body, she hugged herself.

“I miss you, so much,” she said, tears spilling down her cheeks. “You idiot, I miss you so much.”

She numbly looked around their home — his home — and shook her head. She needed to rest and eventually sleep, if that was even possible.

She left the dishes where they were and went to the washroom to take a couple of sleeping pills. She thought about washing them down with a glass of wine, but that would come later that night. She’d have a glass of red wine and laugh with Quirin about some of the brighter moments that he remembered. The game still worried her; the boys shared a special bond and given how she met Quirin, and what her partner had told her, along with the operation her son had had when he was a year old, she knew there was something more to it. And it made her afraid.

She took off her clothes, changing into one of the few shirts that still smelt like him and crawled into bed. Sleep eluded her for a few hours, but the tablets finally took over and she drifted off.

Swimming through her dreams, she was back in the cathedral from seven years ago. The candles, the lights and the smells.

And him.

Ben turned and smiled at her. “Hi.”

“Hi,” her tears felt real as she walked up to him.

He hugged her and she buried her head in his shoulder and cried. His hands felt real, like he was actually there. She breathed him in, wishing this wasn’t a dream and he wasn’t gone.

“Why did you leave us!” She yelled suddenly, pushing him away. “Why did you do this to me? To your son? God, Ben, why did you leave me alone again?”

He looked at her and his eyes shone. “I’m so sorry, Rey. I thought…I thought that it was for the best. I thought I was like him. Rey, every time I looked at you, I just saw death. I saw you dying all of the time and I just… I wanted you to have someone better than me. I wanted to let you go and have someone who didn’t only see darkness.”

She hugged him again, needing to feel his arms around her again. “No, never. There’s only you.”

Standing in the silence of the church, he kissed her and it was like coming home. He tasted like she remembered and she deepened the kiss. She hadn’t been with anyone since him and could only think about him.

He gently broke the kiss. “I saw our son. He’s getting big.”

He brushed the tears from her cheeks as she shook her head.

“How...how many times have you seen him?”

“About a dozen, since he was three. Him and Quirin come into the today and we talk. He asks about me and tells me how sad you are,” he cupped her face. “I’m so sorry, love. I’m so, so sorry.”

He hugged her again and kissed her temple.
“So sorry.”

“That little liar,” she finally laughed. “They’ve been doing this for years and didn’t tell me.”

“Yeah, I sort of told him not to tell you,” he laughed lightly with her. “He’s smart. I wish that…he looked more like you. He looks so much like me, it’s like looking into a small mirror. My mother must be overjoyed. But I wish you didn’t have to wake up everyday and be reminded that I’m gone.”

“What do I do, Ben?” she pulled back, looking up at him. “How do I do this alone?”

He firmed his face. She knew that look. He was going to tell her something that she didn’t want to hear.

“What?” She asked. “Tell me now.”

Nodding, he licked his lips. “Quirin has this idea that…that what they’re doing isn’t just a dream. But that it’s real. He thinks he’s old enough now that they might be able to…save me.”

“What?” She pushed him back, glaring. “What are you talking about?”

“If Quirin and Ben get into the loop, he thinks that they can stop Anakin and save me. And then we’d be together again,” he met her eyes, meaning every word.

“Ben, I’m not sending our son and a teenager after that monster in some crazy loop,” she shook her head. “What happens if they get hurt? What…oh my god, I’m actually considering it. No, Ben, just no.”

He quirked his head. “Just…just think about it, okay. I love you. Today, tomorrow, and forever.”

The dream started to fade and she reached for him again and he slipped through her hands. She cried as his face disappeared into blackness.

She woke up, shaking and crying in their bed. Wiping her eyes, she shook her head. It was just a dream. It wasn’t real. It couldn’t be real.

Numbly, she shifted off the bed and walked to Ben’s room. His bed was still made from yesterday. Quirin always let him sleep on the couch and in their fort. She’d have to talk to him again.

Touching her son’s things brought her back to reality. He wasn’t coming back. He couldn’t come back again.

Her eyes finally found a drawing on the tiny desk in the corner and she felt new tears spring to her eyes. She could almost recognize herself and Ben, drawn wearing a child’s version of suits off to one side. She was holding her partner’s hand, or at least they were overlapping. On the other side, were two shorter figures, clearly her son and Quirin. At their feet, was a black smudge with The bad man written above it in Quirin’s handwriting. At the bottom, she could tell that he had helped her son write something that made her both heartbroken but also caused hope to rise in her chest. It was a hope she didn’t think that she could feel again.

Quirin and Ben Jr save daddy and we’re a family.

Touching the paper, she closed her eyes, feeling a warm tear streak down her cheek.

“Okay, Ben. I’ll let them try. For you to come back to me again.”
End Notes

As the summary says, there will be descriptions of violence and character death in pretty much every chapter. Be warned!

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