WHEN THE HEART CAVES IN

by prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Summary

When the Force Bond reconnects and an assassination attempt fails, where does that leave Ben and Rey?

I'm sorry I'm bad at summaries

Sample:

Time passed in a strange current, Rey still hunched over the saber. Wires, connectors and bolts all spread out across the desktop as the earliest light of dawn hovered over the horizon. She used a data pad to sketch out a new design after taking inventory of the working parts she had left. There was no guarantee that her design was feasible, she wasn't even sure if the kyber crystals would still ignite, but it made it a little easier to think the longer she worked.

Rey had just finished drawing out the magnetic dampener when she felt it.
Oh no.

The force compressed around her, all the muscles in her body going taught, and she closed her eyes against the sensation. How was this happening? It had been weeks since Crait.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
The bright light of the two moons reflected off the ice covered lake. Rey watched as the small transports curved up and out of the tree line and into the atmosphere. Three shuttles, carrying almost half of what was left of the resistance between them, sped off in different directions as her eyes strained to watch the transport that had darted west. She felt more than saw Chewie, Leia and Finn get further and further away.

Rey closed her eyes, taking a steadying breath.

*May the force be with you.*

The few others, who had also seen the troops off, slowly trickled back into the hangar bay. After a few moments of despondent silence, Rey followed. The familiar hum of the electrical systems powering the small bunker soothed Rey's disquiet as she retreated into the hangar bay and down the dimly lit hallway. She didn't like splitting up, there were so few of them left. The base was operating on a skeleton crew, monitoring First Order activity, while the rest of the contingent went on missions to the outer rim to gain support for the Resistance.

Rey's quarters were at the very end of the dormitory. She had requested it specifically, sighting need for quiet and meditation, but really she just wanted to avoid the curious glances and whispers that followed in her wake. She needed to be alone for a little while, needed space from the chattering minds and clouded emotions that filled the Force when she entered a room.

She needed to think.

Sitting down heavily on the bed, Rey crossed her legs and tried to clear her mind as Master Skywalker had instructed. Was that only a few weeks ago? It seemed like decades. Taking deep breaths, she felt herself relax into the Force and become one with her surroundings. The wire in her overhead light was stripped and almost disconnected, the air circulation whined at being activated after so long dormant. Rey reached out further and felt for the crew in the Communications Control Room. Their thoughts and emotions overwhelmed her, and she pulled back. Deciding instead to focus on a young pilot, Rey didn't know his name, who was working on an X-Wing in the main hangar.

The fighter plane wasn't nearly as loud as the young man's emotions, so Rey concentrated on trying to diagnose its ailment. The electricity flowing through the engines guided her efforts, and she lost herself in the machinations.

The pulse of her meditation was interrupted however when the pilot's emotions erupted rather violently. Rey felt his grief as if it were her own. Anguish, longing and heartbreak. Her eyes snapped open, and she pulled back, out of her far-reaching exploration, reluctant tears spilling over her cheeks. It took a moment for her to get her bearings, to feel the thin mattress beneath her once more.

She swiped at her face roughly and fell back against her lumpy pillow, the secondhand emotions not fading as quickly as she'd like. They had hit a little too close to home for comfort.

*This wasn't working.*
Rey couldn’t figure out how to block her fellow Resistance fighter’s emotions and it wasn’t for lack of trying. She wasn’t sure when the floodgates had opened, it could have been on Ach-To when she’d felt the Force flow through herself and the island. It could have been when she had opened herself up in the cave or when her and Master Luke had fought in the downpour, the Force surging around them.

It could have been in the throne room when her and Ben had fought as one, Rey knowing his thoughts and movements as clearly as her own.

*Stop it.* She thought, catching herself. *Don’t think about that.*

It didn’t matter what the catalyst had been. The damage was done, and Rey felt the crushing weight of the thoughts and feelings of the people around her without cease. She rolled onto her side and stared at the dingy gray wall, trying to steady her breath once more.

She needed a distraction.

One of the planet’s moons streamed light in through the pocket-size window and a glint of blue caught Rey’s eye. The Skywalker Lightsaber sat busted into two pieces at the top of her bag.

Rey stared at it for a few moments, her resolve strengthening. Sitting up quickly, she grabbed the destroyed weapon and a toolkit. She sat down at the small desk and pried open the outer casing of both ends. If she could just see how the power grid was wired, she might be able to fix it. She had the power source, actually two power sources now, and a heap of spare parts on her hands.

Determined to succeed, she set to work.

Time passed in a strange current, Rey still hunched over the saber. Wires, connectors and bolts all spread out across the desktop as the earliest light of dawn hovered over the horizon. She used a data pad to sketch out a new design after taking inventory of the working parts she had left. There was no guarantee that her idea was workable, she wasn’t even sure if the kyber crystals would ignite, but it made it a little easier to think the longer she worked.

Rey had just finished drawing out the magnetic dampener when she felt it.

*Oh no.*

The force compressed around her, all sound vanishing for a fleeting moment, and she closed her eyes against the sensation. How was this happening? It had been weeks since Crait. Snoke was dead. This was supposed to be done.

As soon as the Force released its constriction, she knew she was not alone. Rey kept her eyes closed, preferring to ignore this and him. She couldn’t hear him breathe or move, but she felt him on the edges of her consciousness. Rey stayed like that, eyelids firmly shut, for several long moments. It was only after hearing an impatient huff she realized he would not speak first.

Rey also realized she’d been holding her breath.

Steeling herself for what she was about to endure, she emptied her lungs carefully and opened her eyes. All the lightsaber parts were still organized carefully around her, her fingers straining as she squeezed the data pad tightly.

Finally looking up from her work, her eyes swept through the room, landing on his expansive frame laid out across her tiny bed. Rey immediately felt he was underdressed, even though he was wearing pants and a loose tunic. It was just fewer clothes than he normally wore though not as underdressed
as she'd ever seen him.

Her cheeks grew faintly warm at the memory.

Rey let her gaze linger, he had one leg stretched out in front of him, the other bent at the knee with his foot tucked against his calf. His chest kept a steady rhythm, rising and falling in time with his breath, and his left arm was thrown over his eyes, blocking most of his face from her view.

"If you keep staring," His low voice echoed around them. "I might actually be flattered."

Rey snapped to attention, blinking furiously and turned on her stool back to the dismembered saber. She saw him smirk out of the corner of her eye as her embarrassment flowed between them, Rey too flustered to keep a lid on their ultrasensitive connection.

"It's been 23 days since you've seen me last," He continued, not moving from his spot on the bed. Rey hated how his voice seemed to reverberate through her chest. "Have you already forgotten what I look like?"

"Go open an airlock." Rey spat, not looking up from her data pad. Though she'd completely forgotten what she'd been working on.

"Perhaps you haven't missed me after all," His tone was matter of fact as always, no indication of his own state of mind. He moved his arm from his face and finally looked at her. "Have you been plotting with the thieves to-"

"How do you know it's been 23 days," Rey interrupted, her own daring surprising her as she turned to face him once more. His eyes held hers as her voice echoed faintly around them.

He didn't answer.

"You said it'd been 23 days." She continued, sounding mildly puzzled but inwardly relishing in her triumph. "For someone who was rudely awakened from their nap, you sure had that information readily available."

His face was a blank mask but the tremor that vibrated between them let Rey know she'd hit a nerve. She tossed him a self-satisfied smirk before grabbing a screwdriver and attaching a wire at random. Anything to make her look busy. They stayed quiet for a few moments after that. He seemed to wait for the connection to sever, no interest in speaking with her after she gained the upper hand. She continued her mindless wiring and didn't fight the urge to twist the knife in further.

"I heard something interesting the other day," She murmured as she switched out her screwdriver for a set of pliers. "It seems I'm wanted for the murder of Supreme Leader Snoke. Imagine my surprise when that message came across the comm."

He opened his mouth with what Rey assumed was a witty retort but she cut him off. "Then to find out, you had succeeded him," Rey cut a few wires the appropriate length and set to work once more. "Well, I'd be lying if I said it was a shock."

Rey fought the smile that was threatening to surface as she felt animosity sail down the bond.

"Tell me, Supreme Leader," She asked, feigning interest. She caught the slight grimace at his new title and was emboldened. "What are your plans for the galaxy now under your control?"

He stood quickly, surprising her with his sudden movement, though she tried not to let it show. Her eyes tracked him as he moved closer, coming to loom over where she was sitting. His arms caged her
in, one hand on the back of her chair, the other on the desk. His face was inches from hers, her alarm giving way to defiance as his eyes bore into hers.

"What it's always been." He whispered venomously.

Their gaze held for a few tense moments and then the familiar compression of the Force surrounded them, and he was gone.

Rey let out a sigh of relief, allowing herself to relax against the back of the chair for the first time in what felt like hours.

Their encounter still fresh in her mind, Rey's thoughts filtered through the last few minutes in a daze. A memory flashed before her, sparks flying and burning metal scattered throughout the large chamber. A corpse cut clean in two. A black, gloved hand stretched toward her.

*The Sith. The Jedi. The Rebels. Let it all die.*

Her mouth went dry at the sound of his voice, she recalled it as if he were standing before her once more. Rey swallowed against the lump growing in the back of her throat and shut her eyes. Shut him out.

She'd told herself that she would wait for what the Force willed, that maybe someday he would realize that he was an instrument of the Force, not the other way around.

However, it was hard to fight the spark of hope that lit in her chest. When his broad torso had bent over her, when his dark eyes had pierced her own, he didn't sound as convinced as he used to be.
Chapter 2

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

i had to continue this. i couldn't resist.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The massive ship dropped out of hyperspace with little notice taken by the occupants. Another system, another planet, another cold lead to follow up on. Kylo knew as soon as they began their orbit that the Resistance was not below them on the ocean planet. At least, he knew she wasn't.

It had been 36 days since Crait and 13 days since she materialized, seated at his dining table in his private quarters. Kylo had been trying, and failing, to fall asleep on his sofa. He'd rarely slept in the days leading up to her appearance. Afterward, he'd wondered if the sudden resurgence of the bond had been because he'd been so exhausted, let his guard down, and his walls disappear, in an attempt at rest.

His questions had gone unanswered and she had yet to show up again.

The bridge was a mess of activity. Technicians spouting data at each other, attempting to scan for lifeforms outside the known civilizations. Pilots steering the colossal engines into the gravitational pull, triple checking their calculations so that they wouldn't direct the ship into one of the planet's three moons.

They would send squads to the local villages and outposts to check for Resistance activity but the objective no longer held any interest for him.

Turning on his heel, he headed toward the lift, planning to get in a good training session. He needed to relieve some of this tension, however temporarily.

"Supreme Leader." General Hux's formal accent called from just outside the landing area. "Will you be joining us for the debriefing?"

Kylo rounded on him, incensed at his nasally voice and superior manner. "What debriefing?"

"On the missions to the outer rim..." Hux trailed off haughtily.

Taking a shallow breath that did nothing to calm his annoyance, Kylo let his voice drop dangerously, "Lead the way."

The large conference room was only two levels down from the bridge, and they approached a group of high ranking officers mingling outside of the double doors within minutes.

"Let's get started." Kylo grumbled, walking directly through the small circle of bureaucrats. He had just passed through the meeting room doors when he felt the tremor and then the compression. He stopped dead. An officer almost falling over himself in an effort not to collide with Kylo's back.
They all stared at him strangely but continued to file in, seating themselves around the large table.

The Force released him, making his ears pop and breath leave his lungs. His eyes scanned the room, he knew she was here, he could feel her. There- in the corner, near the window. Rey was crouched down, a welding mask covering her face and a torch in her hands.

"You're all dismissed." Kylo commanded, his voice barely more than a whisper but every pair of eyes turned toward him in surprise.

"Excuse me?" Said a portly old Imperialist. "We haven't even start-"

"I said," Kylo extended an arm in front of him, crushing the man's windpipe as if it was between his thumb and forefinger. "You're dismissed."

He released his choke hold and the officers fled from the room, including Hux, who only gave him a disdainful stare before whipping around the corner into the hallway.

The double doors slid shut with a hiss and then they were alone. Her torch flared once more, welding whatever she was working on at her end. She seemed determined to ignore him again, only this time it was his turn to stare.

Her clothes were tattered, she was clearly doing a lot of manual labor. Her hands and forearms were coated with a thin layer of grease, and her boots caked with grime. The torch flared once more and he thought he might burst with the indignation of it.

He didn't have anyone. There was no one that he trusted, no one that he could rely on besides himself. He had once thought that she might be that person, the one person he could talk to. The one person in the galaxy that might understand him.

But he was wrong. She hadn't chosen him, she'd chosen his enemies and it had haunted him ever since. His thoughts consumed with little else besides her. Sometimes he wanted to kill her, sometimes he wanted to convince her to change her mind, but he always wanted to find her.

And here she was.

And yet, she wouldn't bloody talk to him. It took everything he had not to rip the room apart.

"Shame you sent them away," Her voice bounced off the smooth walls and echoed inside his head. "I'm assuming it was important?"

Her attention was still focused downward, but she no longer seemed to be working, she was just actively avoiding eye contact.

He toyed with different ideas of what to tell her and finally settled on the truth. "A debriefing," he said nonchalantly, knowing his next words would affect her greatly. "On the anti-slavery missions in the outer rim."

She looked up at him finally, the horrendous mask still covering her face. "You freed the slaves?"

"Only on paper," Kylo could feel the warring emotions of skepticism and elation radiating off of her. "The real trouble is enforcement-"

"Why would you do that?" She ripped the welder's helmet from her head and stood. She was always interrupting him. He gritted his teeth against her tone, she sounded like she already knew the answer so he deflected.
"My grandfather was a slave."

"So was I."

No matter how hard he tried, Kylo couldn't tear his eyes away from hers. Her hair had come loose from her buns and she had a smear of grease across her right cheek.

"I didn't do it for you." He lied, to her and to himself.

The truth was that his vision of Rey as a child, being sold to that demon, fueled his obsession to rid the galaxy of the slave trade once and for all. Taking out filth like Plutt was just an added bonus.

"How many days has it been this time?"

He tore his gaze from hers and stared out the floor to ceiling windows, fuming at the reminder of his attachment too her. "I don't know."

"Sure you do," Her voice sounded further away and he glanced in her direction just in time to see her vanish. The Force contracted briefly and then he was alone again, with nothing but his irritation and infatuation to keep him company.

Chapter End Notes

find me @prinecssleia on tumblr. requests always open <3
Chapter 3

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

more angst... there is an end in sight i promise

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hiking up the rocky summit had Rey more than a little short of breath. She wasn't even that high up in altitude but the air on this planet was thin. When she'd set out earlier that morning, she'd had no goal for how far she would hike, all she knew was that she needed to get out of the bunker, needed to exercise. She craved the familiar burn in her legs and lungs like a drug. Rey couldn't explain it, she just knew that nothing eased the pressure in her muscles or balanced her mind like pushing her body to the brink.

She glanced back towards the South, the bunker's open hangar door looking a little too small for comfort. Rey hadn't realized how far she'd gone.

Leia was due back anytime today. They'd gotten the transmission from Chewie the evening prior, unfortunately with no other information. The Resistance had no idea how her meeting with the former Old Republic senators had gone and if they had agreed to an alliance or not.

Considering the First Order's new Supreme Leader had used his authority to outlaw slavery on all systems, and word had reached them the storm trooper program had been decommissioned, Rey thought it might become even more challenging to convince people to join their movement.

It was easy to fight against a tyrannical evil like Snoke. A little harder to rally the commoners, however, when they had fair wages and no fear of their children being taken away.

Perhaps that was his plan, gain favor with the general population, get them too distracted by his good deeds. So when the First Order finally made their grab for power, the greater galaxy would be rejoicing at their savior instead of fighting against their dictator.

Plopping down with her back against the slate cliff, Rey pulled out her canteen and took a long gulp. It was a good plan. One that Rey was infuriated she hadn't seen before now.

The elevation was prolonging her recovery. She'd been resting for at least five minutes and still felt drained. A good drained though, her heart was pounding and her skin was warm. Rey felt alive.

That's when she felt the tremor. She groaned aloud and let her head fall back against the rock wall as the force surged around her. Rey blinked a few times against the pressure that built suddenly and then released.

He appeared in front of her, sitting against a large tree trunk, his disengaged lightsaber held loosely in his hand. His hair was a mess and his face and neck were drenched with sweat. The bruise-like circles under his eyes more pronounced then the last time she'd seen him.
How long had it been? 10 days? Maybe more?

"What happened to you?" She asked before thinking.

He rolled his neck, dipping his chin down to look at her. "I could ask you the same."

Rey glared at him and waited for a response, she knew she looked disheveled, but she was weary of his games. Their stubborn gazes held for a few moments before he relented.

"You'll know soon enough." He murmured.

Typical. Rey rolled her eyes at his cryptic response and took another swig from her canteen.

"You shouldn't go off by yourself." His low voice echoed around them.

Her eyes snapped back to his. "How do you know I'm by myself?"

"Would you be talking to me if you weren't?" He looked her up and down before his voice dropped and he continued slowly, "Did you need to get away from your traitor friends for a little while?"

"No-" She spat, but her tone didn't convince him.

"Is the constant running, hiding, and fighting all becoming to much?"

"No," A little more forceful this time. His smug expression made her want to hurl something at his head and Rey was speaking before she could stop herself. "It's just so loud! I can feel everything. It's overwhelming."

Rey immediately regretted her words, the last thing she wanted was open up to him again, but his eyes softened just a touch. Rey looked away in unease, his stare causing a sharp pang in her stomach.

"Sometimes," He said quietly. "It helps to put up a wall-"

"I've tried," She muttered to the ground.

"No," He continued. "I mean physically build a wall around your mind. Brick by Brick. With a door that only you can open."

Her lips parted slightly in surprise as his expression grew more determined.

"Try it."

She drew back in shock at his suggestion. "Now?"

"Why not?"

Rey didn't answer, there were several reasons why not. First, he wasn't her teacher. Rey had no desire to learn how to use the Force as he did. Second, if she let her guard down around him, she was willingly fraternizing with the enemy. What if someone found out? The look on Finn’s imagined face alone had her balking. Third, what if she didn't get her walls up fast enough and he saw into her mind. He could know where their hidden base was, he could know the next moves of the Resistance.

He could know that ever since she’d escaped the Supremacy, with a broken lightsaber and a broken heart, she’d felt like half of herself was missing.
"Try it." He said again. Rey continued to stare as her internal struggle played out and he stared right back.

The rushing sounded in her ears once more and in the blink of an eye, he was gone.

Letting out a deep sigh, Rey closed her eyes against the two suns streaming down on her. She could fall asleep right here if she wanted. It was the most quiet she'd felt in ages.

A loud POP sounded overhead, however, and pulled Rey out of her daze. A shuttle had broken through the atmosphere and was speeding toward the bunker.

Leia.

Chapter End Notes

fine me @prinsecssleia on tumblr. requests always open <3
Kylo was pacing again. It felt like all he done for the last two days was pace.

It was official, the starship contracts that they had negotiated with Corellia had fallen through. How that was possible, he didn't know. Honestly, it was an inconvenience more than anything. There were always other systems, other businessmen who would be willing to maintain the fleet, but Corellia had been an ally for decades, since way back to the Empire, maybe even the Republic.

No, there was something else causing the ache in his chest, and everytime he thought about it, his stomach dropped a little further.

It had been such a strange experience. Minutes after Hux had delivered the news about the failed mediations, he'd felt the prickle at the back of his neck. Dismissing the general quickly, he waited for the tremor but it didn't come. Instead, his head went foggy and his eyesight went black. He'd felt her weak body, her familiar aura filled with warmth and hope, the feeble heartbeat in her chest.

The floor went sideways underneath him and falling to his knees, he clutched his chest. One word vibrating through his bloodstream.

Ben.

The outburst that followed was one of the worst yet. Ransacking his quarters and slicing up his furniture. He had fed his anger with violence and only felt more conflicted. She was dying, his mother was dying, and in more ways than one it was his fault. Kylo had hoped that his rage would clear his head, feed the dark side enough that he could move on from his grief.

It didn't.

That was how Rey had found him. The contrasts in their appearances immediately evident. He was broken and battered, whereas she had been blooming with strength, flushed from her exertion. Her bright eyes had haunted his dreams that night.

He didn't understand. All of this pain and fear should be feeding his abilities, not depleting it.

Looking out over the horizon of the supernova they were circling did him little good. While the solar panels soaked up the energy, he had never felt more empty.

When the tremor pulled him out of his trance, Kylo almost cried out in relief. He hadn't allowed himself to admit it, but he was desperate for news.

Rey blinked to life right next to him, her arms crossed, brow furrowed and lips pressed into a hard line. There were a hundred different things he could ask, however all but one died in his throat as her red-rimmed eyes met his.

"How long." He couldn't even finish the question, his voice giving out as the realization hit him.

Rey looked down to her feet and cleared her throat roughly. "We don't know."
A solar flare lit up the tinted glass and he couldn't tear his eyes away.

"She wants to see you," Rey added quietly. "I told her that I would-"

They both seemed incapable of finishing their sentences.

"How does she know-"

"That I can talk to you?" Rey finished for him and she cleared her throat roughly once more. "This had to be what had you devastated the other day. I accidentally let it slip last night, so I had to tell her everything."

He wondered briefly what horizon Rey was looking out upon, something too bright to be shuttle or base lighting was casting long shadows on her face. "Rey-"

"Please," She croaked, grabbing his forearm tightly. "Don't say no. I can't deliver that news."

Searching her eyes did little to quiet the war raging within him, but he stayed silent all the same. Her hand was still on his arm and he looked between it and her. She pulled back self-consciously. He locked away the part of him that immediately missed her touch.

The rushing noise sounded, the force flowing through and between, separating the two of them once more. Rey gave him a last, desperate look before she vanished.

Chapter End Notes

find me @prinecssleia on tumblr. requests always open <3
Chapter 5

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

i have a feeling i'm not going to get a leia/ben reunion in ix so i'm writing one for my own peace of mind. thanks for the comments and kudos!! they are much appreciated <3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The sand beneath her shoes was hot, permeating the soles of her boots and radiating around her in waves. The starship loomed above her as she pulled the net of spoils from the day behind her. The harder she pulled the heavier her load became until Rey felt like she was sinking into the sand with the effort of it.

Rey. A distant voice called. She tried to cry out her response but no sound came to her. She felt the sand come up over her ankles and she tried desperately to crawl her way out but just sunk deeper into the pit.

Rey- He called again, much closer this time, but the sand was at her knees and she knew if she kept struggling she would only speed up the inevitable.

"Rey!" The shout finally roused her from sleep and her eyes flew open to see his face inches from her own. She cried out in surprise and immediately fell off of the other side of the bed in a heap of blankets.

"What are you doing?" She bellowed indignantly.

He straightened, amusement clearly evident in his eyes but his voice was as colorless as always. "You were having a nightmare."

"So what," Rey snapped, grabbing the blanket crumpled on the floor and wrapping it around herself. Her shift and undergarments were doing little to cover her figure.

"So," He replied. Gratefully, his eyes didn't dip below her face. "I needed to talk to you."

"Fine." Rey said, harsher than she intended. "Then talk."

The fact that he didn't answer right away clued Rey into what exactly the subject matter was. The indecision rolling off him, his expression suddenly unsure.

"I may be able to meet you and-" He hesitated, "and her, but I can't go to your location. They'll track my ship too easily."

Rey easily inferred what he actually meant. If he came here, their base would be compromised. If he came here, the First Order would follow.

"Where then?" Rey's excitement wasn't easily contained and she moved around the bed to stand in
He seemed surprised by her sudden proximity but recovered quickly. "Deep space."

"If I do this," Rey blurted, tempering her enthusiasm for a moment. "and that is a big if, we'd need safeguards. You'd come alone obviously, so would we, maybe bring Chewie-" He scoffed at the mention of his father's best friend.

"Sneer all you want, but of all our pilots, he is the least likely to betray you." His jaw clenched in agitation but he let her continue. "It might take us a while to scramble a ship that is equipped for deep space."

Mind whirring with all of the preparations she would need to make, Rey began to bite a hangnail on her forefinger. She'd need to consult with the doctor to make sure Leia was even capable of a trip through hyperspace. She'd have to convince Chewie, but that would be easy if the request came directly from Leia. They would need fuel and rations and a good amount of blasters. She might as well finish the lightsaber, just in case.

"I'll see what I can do." It was the best she could promise with their current situation.

"I'll be orbiting Bordal in six cycles time. Hail me when you arrive."

Rey nodded once, filtering through what she knew about the outer rim planet. It wasn't much, she had the vague feeling it was uninhabited. "How will you know it's us?"

His brows creased in thought and the expression was so decidedly human that Rey's breath caught. So often, she thought of him as this machine, running on anger and hatred, that she forgot he was just man. Shaped by loneliness and trauma to be sure, but still human.

"Include the first words I ever spoke to you in the transmission, that way I'll know its safe to board."

"Six cycles," Rey repeated back, taking a seat on the bed once more. "Bordal. First words. Got it."

They waited for the bond to sever as it usually did, but the sensation didn't come. Rey had never understood the connection the Force created between them. There was never any rhyme or reason to when or where it happened. The intervals seeming completely random and it never lasted very long, always leaving her feeling like something is left unsaid, a conversation not well and truly finished.

This time however it lingered and they stared at each other awkwardly.

"Where am I sitting?" Rey had been itching to ask for a while but never seemed to find the right time. "On your end? Am I just floating or does it look like I'm sitting on something?"

"You're sitting on my bed."

"Oh." Rey's mouth snapped shut in surprise. So he was in his quarters as well.

"Why would you think you'd be floating?"

She shrugged, feeling foolish. "What if you were in a place that didn't have anywhere to sit and I sat down? Would it look like I was floating?"

The look he gave her was disconcerting. He narrowed his eyes in bewilderment before cracking the smallest of smiles. Sensing her embarrassment, he changed the subject.

"What are you going to tell the Rebels?" His voice sounded so characteristically bitter that Rey bit
back a smirk of her own. "You're taking their prize general away after all."

"I don't know," Rey said honestly. "Make up something about the last rite of the Force?"

He lifted his eyebrows, almost impressed, before sitting down next to her. There was at least a foot between them but the air seemed to spark and heat between their chests. However, in a moment it was gone, and Rey thought she had imagined it.

"Not bad. Maybe I'll do the same." He propped one leg up on the bed frame, resting his elbow on his knee, and looked positively relaxed. It was so reminiscent of another night, months ago, that Rey had to filter through all that had happened since then, to remind herself that he wasn't who she'd thought he was. He wasn't her friend, he wasn't her ally. He was supreme leader of the First Order.

He must have felt the friction of her thoughts because he looked at her with interest. No anger, no hatred, just curiosity.

"Why do you do this?" She murmured, her voice thick with emotion.

"Do what?" he asked defensively.

"This!" Rey gestured between them, determined to get an answer. "Make me want to trust you."

He blinked but otherwise gave her no indication of what he was feeling. Tears pricked the corners of Rey's eyes but her gaze held steady. She wasn't letting him out of this one.

His eyes dropped to her lips and her breath hitched in apprehension and understanding. The smallest swirl of emotions floated around her, longing mixed with doubt and uncertainty. A war of desire and despair, but most of all, an undeniable sense of rightness when they were together.

Another sensation started in her middle and the Force was converging before she knew what was happening. "No, wait!" She called out, pleading for one more moment but he was gone.

She swallowed against the dryness in her throat. The churn of feelings had disappeared when he had and Rey wondered vaguely at how she was able to discern them so quickly.

Perhaps because they were so close to her own.

**Six cycles, Bordal, first words.**

She repeated their plan to herself as she laid against her standard issue pillow. Unable to ignore the warmth that lingered in the place he'd been sitting.

Chapter End Notes

find me at @prinecssleia on tumblr. requests always open.
Chapter Summary

this is by far the shortest chapter and yet took the longest to write.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"No, Wait!"

The words echoed in Kylo's mind for several minutes following the broken connection. Her voice pleading with the Force for one more moment. The emptiness that accompanied her absence was familiar, and unwanted. An overwhelming array of emotions washed over him as he realized she was pleading for one more moment, with him.

Something in his chest cracked open, warmth flooding into his bloodstream with frustration and exhilaration. The warring emotions competing to see which Kylo would choose to act on.

He decided on both.

Six cycles was too long, he had to see her again, and he couldn't trust that they would have another encounter before then. Rising from his bed quickly, he paced the length of his room, sorting through the knowledge he held about Force bonds. Disappointingly, it was very little. There were old legends about warrior pairs who had telepathic connections, able to feed off of each other's strength in a fight, but nothing of this magnitude. Their mutual experiences spanned lightyears and neither of them seemed to be able to escape it.

Kylo didn’t take Snoke at his word. He’d felt connected to Rey since that damned interrogation, when she'd walked right through his carefully crafted walls with no training and no idea what she was capable of. Seeing right to his deepest, darkest fears had only been a small piece of what she had taken from him, he knew that now.

Snoke had to have only enhanced what was already there. It would have been impossible for him to make such a powerful connection out of nothing. Plus the timing of the episodes still held no logic, they were seemingly random, and continued after Snoke's death. That eliminated his former master's control in regulating their connections. It brought him back to his original question from the first moment he'd seen her appear on that starship, right before she'd shot him through the chest.

Why was the force connecting them?

There had to be a way to tap into the bond consciously, this lack of control was driving him nuts. However, this wasn't a problem he could beat into submission and he let out all the air in his lungs in a huff. As much as he hated it, he'd have to approach this from a different mentality.

So for the first time in ten years he sat down cross legged, tried to clear his mind, and meditated.
literally every writer says it but comments and kudos are the lifeblood that fuel any story and are very much appreciated. thank you for reading and for enjoying this version of these characters.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

hey look at that.. some plot!

The blueish glow of hyperspace was almost a lullaby to Rey as she stared out of the Falcon's massive bridge windows. She hadn't slept in days, not really. Catching two or three hours, every now and then, just kept her from an inevitable collapse.

She would rest when this was over.

Checking the monitor, it showed six minutes to Bordal. Rey sighed, and tightened her grip on the newly repaired lightsaber. Every instinct pointed toward this being a terrible idea, and most likely a trap. The remote location, their lack of backup, their mostly damaged ship. Rey and Chewie had done their best to put the Falcon back together, but money and parts were scarce so they'd had to improvise on a few vital systems.

Chewie lumbered in behind her and took a seat. He'd been sitting with Leia for most of the trip, keeping an eye on her vitals. The general wasn't doing well. The physicians said her extended time spent in the vacuum of space, after the Resistance cruiser had been attacked, took a heavy toll on her body and it had been slowly shutting down ever since.

"How is she?" Rey asked quietly, removing her feet from the dash and checking the monitor once more. Four minutes to arrival. Chewie mumbled a grim Same as before, and began his final checks for approach.

Leia put on a brave face, the bravest Rey had ever seen, but they all knew this was uncharted waters. The little energy that Leia had left was filled with an anxious sort of hope and Rey asked the Force over and over again for confirmation that she hadn't made a terrible mistake in agreeing to this plan. There had been no answer.

The two minute alert sounded and Rey strapped in. They had no idea what they were walking into, so they angled the shields and prepared the hail, the signal encoded with five words.

**THE DROID? WHERE IS IT?**

They dropped out of hyperspace with a gentle lurch, Rey trying to keep it as smooth as possible for Leia's sake. Her and Chewie immediately began scanning the skies. The planet below them was a mix of browns, greens and blues. Looking, for the most part, like any other habitable planet. Rey wondered vaguely why there were no colonies, then remembered she was suppose to be on high alert.

She sent the short range transmission out in all directions, her stomach in knots. There were several tense moments of Chewie looking between the monitor and the skies before the communicator beeped and a single word appeared on screen.
"What does he mean NO?" She asked indignantly.

*Ask him,* Chewie growled. She did, they only had to wait a few seconds for his response.

**TRY AGAIN.**

"We don't have time for this," Rey fumed and typed out their coordinates with docking instructions.

*How do you know it's him?* Chewie asked loudly as Rey unbuckled her belts and grabbed the lightsaber once more.

"Who else would argue with me via shuttle transmissions?"

She got up quickly, Chewie right behind her, and headed down the hall toward the loading bay. Leia gave them a tight smile as Chewie grabbed his crossbow. Rey gave her shoulder a gentle squeeze as she passed.

They heard the docking mechanisms groan behind the airlock door and Rey felt a tug around her middle. Stopping in the center of the hall, Rey and Chewie intentionally blocked the path to the common area.

The hydraulics hissed, opening the loading bay doors and he stepped on board, cape billowing behind him. He looked like an overgrown mynock more than anything and Rey had to suppress a laugh.

He looked around with a bitter curiosity before his eyes landed on Rey and Chewie, weapons drawn. His brows raised in boredom.

"Is that necessary?" He asked, nodding toward the crossbow. Rey felt the absence of the echo that usually accompanied his low voice and felt the knot in her chest loosen just a bit.

"It might be." Rey said simply, followed by Chewie bellowing angrily at him. Rey assumed most of it was the Wookie's version of colorful language but the gist was, *If you break her heart again, I'll kill you myself.*

"He said-" Rey started, intending to interpret what she could, but he cut her off.

"I know what he said," His eyes didn't leave Chewie's. "Where is she?"

Rey's voice softened and nodded behind her, "Through here."

She led him down the hallway, Chewie bringing up the rear, the crossbow pointed at the spot between his shoulder blades. Rey allowed herself one sigh of relief, he was here and he was alone, just like they planned. Glancing behind her, she looked at him more closely.

His hair was shorter, he must have just had it cut, and the hollows of his cheeks had filled out since she'd last seen him. Before she could further her assessment, however, his eyes met hers and Rey snapped her attention ahead once more.

As they rounded the corner, Rey stepped aside, giving him a clear path to the bunk where Leia was resting. He stopped abruptly and she felt the wave of his emotion wash over her. Shame, guilt, shock, anguish. She closed her eyes against the sensations, trying to keep her head clear.
Leia's lips parted in surprise as she took in her son. He swallowed heavily then started forward again slowly, grabbing the crate Chewie had occupied most of their journey and pulling it closer to the bunk.

"Ben," Leia whispered tearfully, reaching out a frail hand.

He cleared his throat, and took her bony fingers in his own, massive hands. "Hi, mom."

He leaned toward his mother and propped his elbows up on the bunk next to her, holding her hand close to his cheek. Rey looked down at her feet, feeling all of the sudden like she was intruding on something incredibly private.

"Look at you," Leia's smile widened and she looked like she was trying to memorize every inch of his face. "You're a man."

"Not a very good one, I'm afraid," and the smile he gave her looked more like a grimace.

Leia's voice changed, her tone becoming more stern and she gave him a hard look. "What are you doing, Ben? You've never desired this sort of power."

He dropped his eyes and breathed out a hard sigh. "It seemed like the easiest way to finally get rid of everything.. to move on."

"You can't erase the past, son. None of us can," Leia squeezed his hand tightly and he met her eyes once more. "We can only learn from it and try to do better than the people who came before us."

He held her gaze a long time, before murmuring,"I'm not very good at apologizing, or forgiving."

"That may be true," Leia ran a delicate finger down the scar that split his face and her eyes flicked to Rey quickly. "But I'm glad you have someone to talk to, anyway."

This was not going how Rey had pictured it. She had tried to warn Leia, that all she would be met with when she saw her son again, would be apathy and spite. As it turned out, however, she was wrong. All she could feel between the two of them was love and regret.

Maybe Ben Solo wasn't gone after all.

The moment she thought it, she hated herself. It was foolish to hope for something when all evidence pointed toward it never happening. That was how she had wound up in this mess in the first place. Willingly handing herself over to him for no other reason than hope. His problems were his own, she couldn't force him to change. Rey had learned that the hard way.

When he spoke again, his voice was barely audible. "Mom, I-

An almighty shudder went through the Falcon and several proximity alerts sounded through the ship. Rey shrieked, grabbing the wall for support and got to the port window just in time to see three tie fighters scream past.

"Chewie!" She yelled behind her. "Get Leia strapped in."

She ran to the bridge and gaped as a Star Destroyer loomed above them.

"We have to get out of here," Rey flinched at the sound of his voice, she hadn't noticed him follow her. "Now."

They both made to sit down in the captain's chair and Rey looked at him harshly. "No, you sit there."
She said pointing to the co-pilot's seat. He ground his teeth but didn't argue further.

"Give me full shields." She commanded, pointing over his shoulder, "Red switch, over there."

He gave her a scathing look, "I know where it is." But he flipped the switch, along with several others.

"Then shut up and be useful. I'm going to try and lose them."

"Lose them? We need to make the jump to lightspeed."

Rey flipped several switches and took over the manual controls, forcing the separation of his ship from the Falcon. "We can't."

"What do you mean we can't?"

"The fuel cells, they need to recharge before we can make the jump."

"Recharge!?" He bellowed. "We don't have a repulsor hyperdrive motivator?"

"It's damaged." Rey said simply, the Falcon lurching under her touch, trying to avoid the cannons.

He sounded like he was doing everything in his power to keep his voice even. "Damaged?"

"Yes, damaged." Rey snapped. "Someone sent an entire fleet of Tie-Fighters after us on Crait. It was damaged."

He grumbled something Rey couldn't hear but grabbed the controls to the guns directly below the bridge.

"You know," Rey grunted, leaning hard left as they rolled to avoid another bombing run. "You could order them to stop firing."

"And let them know I'm aboard the most hated ship in the galaxy?"

Rey pulled up at the last second and one of the fighters, not fast enough to follow, crashed into the side of the destroyer. "I think you're the only one who hates it."

A Tie-fighter crossed his sights and he fired, hitting it in the wing, but it was damage enough to send it careening sideways. As they turned around to try and catch the fighter behind them off guard, the Star Destroyer fired on his ship, blowing it to pieces.

"Oh," Rey said smugly. "Guess they wouldn't have listened anyway. It seems we've stumbled upon a plot to assassinate you."

He didn't look surprised, just furious as he continued to fire on the fighter speeding after them.

"This gage here," Rey pointed quickly, then resumed her barrel roll. "Let me know when it reaches eighty percent, and we need deflector shields up front."

Another three Tie-Fighters came zooming out of the destroyer and caught up to them easily.

"60 percent." He said, grabbing a lever and releasing a handful of flares behind them. Rey didn't even know this ship had flares. Two of the fighters didn't evade fast enough and ignited, while the other two shot off another round of blasts at their engines.
"Here," Rey said, flipping the controls over to his side. "Take the wheel."

They shot off hard right as soon as he took the controls and Rey almost fell out of her chair. She shot him a look but he just smirked, keeping his eyes on the fight. Rey racked her brain quickly, trying to think of anywhere they could go, even temporarily. Her first two options she entered into the computer shot back not viable. She took a deep breath and tried to not let the adrenaline take over. Her third try came back successful and the calculations for the jump to lightspeed began.

"70 percent." He said, glancing at the gage. Rey switched the deflector shields back to full power at the rear to protect the engines.

"Chewie!" She yelled out the door and down the hall. "We're almost ready to make the jump."

He howled back in response. Rey hoped all of this excitement wasn't too hard on Leia but she needn't worry, Chewie would take care of her. Rey just needed to get them out of here.

"80 percent." He grabbed the two switches above them to power the hyperdrive. "I've got a bad feeling about this."

Rey just grinned and punched the lever forward. The engines bellowed as the stars stretched in front of them and they shot off into the darkness.
Chapter 8

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

archive warnings apply in this chapter.

Listening to Ben and Rey holler at each other from down the hall had Leia smiling, in spite of the pain in her chest. Chewie had strapped her to the bunk securely but it didn't stop her stomach from lurching at every roll and turn. It was becoming harder and harder to stay awake, the energy flowing through her becoming weaker the longer she held on.

Something popped nearby and steam began shooting out of a grate in the wall. Chewie growled in surprise but immediately got to work trying to fix whatever had busted. This ship had always been a headache, it was a small comfort to know that some things hadn't changed in thirty years.

She was so tired. A certain type of exhausted that only came at the end of a person's life and she closed her eyes against the pressure building in her body.

"Leia-"

Her eyes flew open at the voice. Luke was sitting on the edge of her bunk, a faint blueish glow around his edges.


He took her hand in his. "It's time."

"I know." She nodded gently, looking down the hall, her thoughts reaching out to Ben and Rey.

"They'll be okay." Luke murmured, and when Leia looked back at him he was smiling. "They've got each other."
They were going through the system checks when he felt it. Felt her.

Felt her leave.

"No-" He mouthed, tripping over himself as he fled down the hall, feeling as if he was about to wretch. Rounding the corner, he saw Chewie wailing quietly, sitting against the far wall. His mother laying just where they'd left her, laid out on the ship's makeshift bed, eyes closed, a content smile still on her lips.

She looked as if she could be sleeping, except he couldn't feel her anymore.

Rey ran up behind him and he heard her let out a little gasp. The two of them stayed rooted to the spot, the shock of it too much to bear.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

this BY FAR has been my most favorite chapter to write. i'm sorry about the emotional roller coaster and the run on sentences. thanks for sticking with me and for your comments and kudos. <33

The landing was careless. Rey, however, couldn't be bothered. The overgrown forest settled back into it's easy rhythm as she shut off the engines.

Allowing herself this one moment of grief, she let her face fall into her hands. Rey welcomed the darkness as she pressed the heels of her palms into her eyes until she saw stars.

She was afraid. She could at least admit that to herself. Afraid for the Resistance, afraid it would collapse now that they didn't have leader to rally behind. Afraid for the systems that would continue to fall into chaos without the Resistance to fight for them. Afraid for herself, that this time she wouldn't be able to keep the loneliness at bay.

Rey rubbed at her eyelashes, trying and failing to will the tears away. This sadness wasn't all hers either, she kept getting hit with bursts of despair from the other end of the ship. She didn't know how he lived with those violent emotions, they were deafening.

Most of all she was afraid for him, that this would be the catalyst that spins him so far down into the black that he can't find his way out.

Letting out a heavy sigh, Rey got up and headed toward the outer door, the hydraulics hissing as she released the walkway.

Takodana hadn't changed much since the last time she was here. It was still greener than anywhere she had ever seen, the whole planet seemed to be bursting with the color. It was hot and humid, with heavy undergrowth covering nearly every inch of dirt. The sun was low in the sky but Rey didn't know enough about the planet to discern whether it was sunrise or sunset.

Across the large lake, Rey could barely make out the ruins of Maz's once magnificent castle.

She didn't know if Maz still called this system home, she didn't know if any ally called this system home but until she could make contact with the resistance, it would have to do.

Climbing atop the Falcon she took in the damage. She knew the communicator dish needed to be checked, when she'd tried to make contact earlier, she'd only gotten error messages. It also looked like one of the shield generators had been fried, as well as a long range scanner.

Rey jumped down from the ship and went around back to check the engines, that was when she heard him stomping down the walkway. She leaned around the edge of the ship to try and catch his eye but he turned and headed in the opposite direction.

"I'm going to build a pyre." He called over his shoulder, before disappearing into the trees.
She let him go. Rey had a feeling that most of the time, he wanted space before companionship. A coping mechanism she knew well. There was no sense in trying to talk to him yet so she grabbed a box of spare parts from inside the falcon and got to work.

It was hours before she saw him again. Turns out it had indeed been sunset, and it was well past dark when he came trudging through the clearing. He was stripped down to his pants and undershirt, a layer of sweat coating his skin. Rey lifted her welder's mask but he didn't look her way, just kept his long stride steady as he headed back into the ship.

A moment later she heard Chewie let out a groan from inside the Falcon and heard two sets of footsteps. He had wrapped Leia in his cape and was carrying her down the walkway. Chewie was right behind him, carrying a lit torch. Rey took off her thick gloves and helmet and followed after them silently.

They walked less than two-hundred yards, coming to the edge of the river that fed into the lake on the other side of the Falcon. He laid his mother down gently on the pyre he'd crafted from the several cut stumps that surrounded them. They hadn't been chopped with an axe or a blade, the trees were scorched. Must have been his lightsaber then.

Chewie handed him the torch and he lit the kindling beneath the logs, giving it a gentle shove so that the momentum carried the raft out to the middle of the river. Rey took two steps forward to stand next to him on the bank and crossed her arms across her chest, Chewie doing the same on his right.

"Why here?" He asked, surprising Rey with his question. "Why Takodana?"

"I don't know," She stammered. "It just popped into my head. Must have been all your talk of first words.."

The fire reflected off the smooth water and cast orange and black shadows across the riverbank. A single tear escaped down Rey's cheek as she watched it burn.

"You got them wrong." His tone was solemn even though Rey knew he was trying to tease her.

"To be honest," Rey said through a sniff. "I don't remember much from that day. I remember being terrified, that a massive person in a metal helmet, was chasing me through the woods with a laser sword."

She chuckled thickly and glanced at him just in time to see the ghost of a smile.

"I remember," Her tone growing serious once more. "Being terrified at not being able to move, terrified of the pain of you trying to see into my head-"

Rey stopped talking before she made things worse. She didn't know what compelled her to share her point of view of their first meeting. She wasn't very good with people, always saying the wrong things at the wrong time.

"The girl I've heard so much about." He said quietly, he hadn't taken his eyes off of the raft since he'd lit the pyre. "That was the first thing I ever said to you."

They watched the fire for a few quiet moments, Rey trying to buck up her courage. She took a deep breath and uncrossed her arms. She reached out to run a wary finger across the knuckles of his clenched fist. He relaxed at her touch and she tentatively fit the rest of her hand inside his palm.

He tore his eyes away from the fire and met her gaze. She tried to get a read on his emotions but her own were in such turmoil that she didn't know where she ended and he began. There were no life-
altering visions this time. Just the feel of his calloused fingers against her skin.

Rey didn't know much about funerals. Occasionally on Jakku, they would have parties when a well-liked scavenger had died. Sometimes if they had a good friend or a loved one, they would tell stories or recite a poem. She didn't know if that was common among everyone or just desert people.

"Do you want to say anything?" She asked hesitantly.

He stared out across the river for a few moments before answering, "She knows."

The three of them stayed like that, watching the raft float gently downstream, until the fire burned low and disappeared around the river bend.
Staring at the belly of the Millennium Falcon, wasn't exactly the same as sleep, but he had been unable to quiet his mind enough to drift off after they'd returned from the river. Laying out a bedroll on the hard ground, instead of trying to find a place inside the ship, he'd alternated between fighting waves of nausea and sorrow. Attempting to deal with his grief as quietly as possible.

Eventually, his thoughts had drifted to what he was going to do next. There was no doubt in his mind that Kylo Ren had been pronounced dead to the galaxy. Even if they'd been able to confirm he wasn't on board when his ship blew, Hux would have announced the operation as a success. Assuming the title of Supreme Leader, re-instating the Storm Trooper program and implementing a few of his more questionable ideas.

He had no desire to return to the First Order, even though he knew he could kill Hux whilst expending minimal effort, the idea of ruling held no interest for him. The Knights of Ren were dead, Snoke was dead, and with his involvement or not, the First Order would soon follow. He was trying to be honest, really honest, with himself and he'd only come up with one solution.

Perhaps Kylo Ren should stay dead too.

The problem, was that he didn't know how to be Ben Solo anymore. Maybe, he never knew. He'd always felt defined by his parents legend and the creeping darkness that was always trying to weave it's way into his thoughts. He killed his father in an effort to rid himself of the constant battle raging inside him. The legacy that was his parentage versus the crippling need to make a name for himself outside of their circle of influence.

In the end, that had only caused him more agony.

Then there was Snoke, the ever present darkness that had loomed over him since before he was even born. He'd fled to his new master, and the dark side, when Luke betrayed him but instead of being met with acceptance and purpose, his inner torture had only increased. Snoke burrowing inside him like a cancer and feeding his anger and resentment to fuel his power.

Killing him had been easy, and the dark voices had finally ceased.

So what was left? He was a man without a name or a family or a purpose. He'd thought he could fill the void with Rey by his side, but she'd betrayed him. Left him alone and unconscious and he didn't know if he could ever forgive her for it.

The earliest lights of dawn began showing on the horizon and distant thunder rumbled above them.

If only he could sleep, shut his brain off for just a few hours. Maybe he'd awaken with a new outlook on life as opposed to this despondent reflection. He was sick to death of re-living the past.

He would stay with Rey for now. As capable as she was, there were still things he could teach her about the Force. Then when the inevitable fight against the First Order called her to the front lines, he could find a distant uninhabited planet and live out his days in exile.

Lightning flashed through the forest, followed by a loud clap of thunder. He shut his eyes, feeling the energy of the storm around him in a hope that it could drown out the storm within.
Chapter 12

Chapter by jensenackals, princessleia (jensenackals)

A flash of lightning lit up the sky as Rey watched from the bridge of the Falcon. She'd been awake for almost an hour, watching the storm roll in. These displays of nature still fascinated her and she felt a rare sort of exhilaration when the loud clap of thunder sounded a few moments later. Her attempt at meditating when she'd awoken had failed quickly, her sleep had been shallow and she had a crick in her neck from drifting off in the chair. So she'd given up.

Master Skywalker would be disappointed in her lack of perseverance.

The communication systems would be priority today, she needed to get them up and running as soon as possible. The Resistance still didn't know about Leia's passing, plus having the former Supreme Leader in her custody would be considered vital information. Rey got a bad taste in her mouth at the thought of presenting him to Resistance leadership, and refused to ask herself why.

She massaged her tense muscles as she walked through the ship trying to gather supplies. Chewie was already up, working down in the engine room on the shield generator and Rey gave him a good natured scratch as she passed.

The air was thick with humidity as she stepped outside. Rey dropped her bag and box of spare parts and pried open an access hatch.

"You didn't have to sleep out here." She called behind her, to where he was laying beneath the gunner dome.

He sat up and stretched, cracking a few joints in his arms and neck. "Didn't really sleep."

Rey pulled out a few wires and tried to find the fuse that was cutting off the connection to the communications dish. If she could isolate the fluctuation, she might be able to bypass it. He slowly walked over to where she was working and looked over her array of tools and parts.

"Not a lot to work with..." He said absentmindedly.

"-almost there." She reached back as far and she could, but her arms weren't long enough.

"Do you need some help?"

"No," she grunted, she could feel the small box brush against her fingertips, "-almost there."

He sighed impatiently, "Let me."

Reluctantly, Rey stepped aside, rubbing the spot on her shoulder that the hatch had pinched. "I just need the breaker box from the next interval."

She had barely gotten the words out when a loud thud sounded and he pulled out the box and tossed it to her.

"Thanks." Rey muttered awkwardly and sat down to begin taking it apart.

He paced around her distracted, looking around at the trees, lake and sky but not seeming to be taking it in. "What's your plan?" He asked finally.
"My plan?" Rey echoed, not looking up from the fuses in her lap, and he didn't answer. She looked up to find him gazing at her with one eyebrow raised. "I don't have one."

His eyes narrowed slightly. "You're a terrible liar."

"Am not," Rey replied indignantly.

"Yes, you are." He said, and plopped down in front of her, stretching his legs out. "Here, ask me a question. I'll answer and you can tell me if I'm lying or not."

"Fine." She said through gritted teeth, setting the breaker box aside. If he wanted to play games, she could at least make it uncomfortable for him. "Tell me why you hate your father's ship so much."

She waited for the burst of anger or hatred that usually accompanied him when anyone brought Han Solo up, but it never came.

"Because," He said evenly. "When I was a boy, I'd have to watch it fly away. My father leaving for weeks, sometimes months at a time, and I'd never know when he was coming back."

Rey sat stunned in surprise, his eyes never leaving hers.

"Was that the truth or a lie?" He blinked and the spell was broken.

Rey tried to gage his emotions but there was nothing to interpret. "I don't know."

"Because I separated my personal feelings from the words. Okay, your turn-"

"What?" Rey asked confused. "I don't know how to do that."

"Use your wall. Now, where did you get the idea for a double-ended lightsaber?"

Rey swallowed with difficulty and placed a protective hand on her bag. "How did you-"

"I noticed it first thing. The handle was too long and there were two ignitions, one on each end. The kyber crystal in the orginial saber cracked in two, it wasn't hard to put it together."

She gaped at him and wondered what else he knew about, that he wasn't letting on. "It just came to me."

"Lie." He sighed, disappointed.

"It isn't!" She really had stumbled upon it, flipping through the old Jedi texts late one night. But Rey wasn't sure if she wanted him to know that she had the relics in her possession. She had taken them without permission, after all.

"Your intention to deceive is clear, you're as open as a book." He leaned back on his hands and leveled her with a knowing stare. "Try again. Feel the blockade on the edges of my mind and see if you can replicate it."

Rey let out an annoyed sigh and let her awareness expand to surround him, only she didn't have a good question to ask. "What's your shoe size?"

"Why would I lie about that?" He jabbed, rolling his eyes. "Give me a real question."

She looked at him for a few tense moments. There was one, but Rey didn't know if she had the courage to ask it and quite frankly, she was afraid of his answer.
"If I asked," She hesitated, trying to observe any doubt or conflict. "If I asked you to come back with me, to the Resistance. Would you?"

He stared at her, not moving a muscle and Rey held her breath.

"Probably not."

Though Rey had prepared herself for the answer, her stomach still dropped in disappointment.

"I need to finish reconnecting the comms." She stood, avoiding eye contact and grabbed her tools once more. "Chewie will need help with the long range scanner this afternoon and there are some rations stashed in the culina if you're hungry."

Thankfully, he didn't question her sudden withdrawl and Rey tried to ignore the sounds of him brushing off his pants. She didn't hear him go back into the ship and she turned just in time to see him disappear into the trees.
He had lied.

And that terrified him.

In that moment, Rey must have been too caught up in her own tension, to not have sensed his own. Because he knew, as soon as the question left her lips, he knew that he would go anywhere she asked him too.

As he walked through the forest, the skies above him on the brink of a downpour, he regretted telling her no. It had been his first instinct to push her away, to avoid vulnerability at all costs, and now he would have to deal with the consequences. She was stubborn, and proud, and he knew she wouldn't ask again.

What would the Resistance do with him anyway?

No doubt, hold an extremely biased war tribunal and sentence him to execution in some painful way or another. He still hadn't decided how much of him wanted to make things right, but he would never be satisfied with being a martyr.

He could always trade information for his freedom. After all, who better to provide insider information than the former Supreme Leader. But that surely had days, if not weeks, of starving in a jail cell and that just sounded boring.

Normally, he would try to relieve his inner struggle physically. Use his pounding heart and aching muscles to clear his head, but he was just too tired

So, he kept on walking in wide circles around their makeshift camp. Trying to ignore the creeping feeling that he had just ruined his last chance at peace.
Chapter 14

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

this chapter is literally all dialogue. did i forget how to write exposition? wtf

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Alpha Base, this is Trixie. Do you copy?"

Rey was in the bridge, and had been repeating the words for half an hour. All systems checked out, and her code was showing active, but there had yet to be a response. She closed her eyes, trying to keep her voice even.

"Alpha Base, this is Trixie. Do you copy?"

It had begun to rain, the large droplets hammering the ship. Maybe the storm was causing interference in the upper atmosphere and the call couldn't get through. Maybe it was time for shift turnovers at the base and they hadn't checked for long range signals yet. Maybe something had happened, and the base had been compromised.

"Alpha Base, this is Trixie. Do you copy?"

A sharp static sounded in her ear piece and she cried out in relief.

"Alpha Base, this is Trixie. Do you copy?"

Rey tried again, a hysterical urgency taking over her voice.

"Rey!"

She breathed out another sigh of relief at the sound of his voice. "Finn -"

"We've been trying to patch you through, but your signal is really weak. Where are you? Are you okay?"

"Yes," She said through a tearful smile. "Yes, I'm fine. The Falcon was damaged so we've been trying to patch her up."

"Damaged -"

There was a short scuffle on the other end and then Poe's voice sounded through the speaker. "Rey what happened? How's Leia?"

"Leia.." Rey drummed her fist against her forehead to keep the tears at bay. She had not been looking forward to this part. "Leia passed one and a half cycles ago. Chewie said it was in her sleep... she was at peace."

She was met with silence for several moments following her news.
"Wait," Poe said, sounding a little angry. "Chewie said? Where were you? Were you with her?"

"Yes, but-" Rey stammered, she was becoming flustered at the memory, and she didn't know how much she should tell them about the fire fight. "The First Order found us, I was trying to get us out of there and that's- that's when she-"

Rey took a moment to regain her composure, her nose was running and she was finding it difficult to speak.

"Rey," Finn's voice sounded through the static once more. "Kylo Ren is dead, Hux has taken over as Supreme Leader. They're blaming his assassination on the Resistance, but everyone who has reported back to base, hasn't had any contact with the First Order..."

Finn's question hung in the air even though his statement remained unfinished. This was it. This was the moment where her true loyalties would be tested.

"You can tell them." His low murmur made Rey jump and she turned around to see him leaning against the door jam. He was soaking wet, his clothes and hair dripping with rain water.

They stared at each other as the silence stretched out between them. Did he know how much it meant to her? That she didn't have to choose?

Finn's voice sounded through her earpiece and diverted her attention back to the comms. "Rey? Do you copy?"

"Yes, I'm here." She cleared her throat roughly before continuing. "He's not dead. It's a long story but I've got him here with me and we are-"

"I'm sorry, Rey-" Poe interrupted. "You must be cutting out, I swore you just said Kylo Ren was with you."

"Yes, that's correct."

"He's not dead?"

"No."

"Is he your prisoner?"

Rey sighed. "I wouldn't say that, no."

The connection went silent again and Rey heard a scoff behind her, but she ignored it.

"I gotta tell ya, Rey," Poe sounded through the static. "You're not making a whole lot of sense here."

"I know," She pleaded. "I'm sorry. It's just a bit more complicated than that."

Finn came back on, "When are you coming back to base?"

Rey did a quick mental checklist of their repairs before answering. "We'll be ready to fly in less than two cycles."

"Okay well keep us updated." She could hear Finn's impatience even through the static. "We got word of a First Order attack against Corellia. We don't know when, but it will be soon."

Rey's eyes darted behind her but if he had any idea what they were talking about, he didn't show it.
"I'll check back in a twelve hours."

"Rey," Finn's voice called out to her. "Just, be careful."

She didn't want to end the connection, it had been so good to hear her best friend's voice. But she had rerouted all the power reserves to the communication systems and the gauge was blinking steadily at her, showing the levels at critical. Hopefully, the storm would let up soon, she'd have to put the solar panels out tomorrow if they had any hope of getting this ship in the air in two days time.

She propped an elbow up on the armrest and let her head fall into her hand. What bliss it would be, to not have to think for a little while.

"You weren't going to tell them about me." His voice was so low, she barely heard him.

Rey kept her eyes closed, refusing to look at him. "I hadn't decided yet."

Rey stood quickly, letting out an impatient sort of shriek, and shoved past him. It was too much, she couldn't think with him there, and he was always there. If he wasn't looming over her with his furrowed brow and intense eyes, he was in the back of her mind, an ever constant presence that she couldn't be rid of.

She stomped down the hall, knowing full well he was following her. With all he had put her through the past few days. No, past few weeks. Hell, past few months! The least he could do was leave her alone for one goddamn second.

The feeling is mutual, you know.

Instead of hearing it externally, Rey felt his voice reverberate in her mind, and finally snapped.

"Get out of my head!" She yelled, turning to shove him hard in the chest. He stumbled back half a step but didn't retaliate. Rey stood rooted to the spot, her chest heaving in anger, the force surging through her. Her restraint was close to failing, and it took everything she had not to empty all of her contention and animosity in his direction.

"For someone who is terrible at lying," His voice dropped dangerously. She felt the anger building in him too, along with several other emotions, but Rey was too preoccupied to try and recognize them. "You are very good at lying to yourself... About your parents. About me. About your power-"

"What are you talking about?"

"Feeding off the emotions around you, using it to fuel your manipulation of the force." He let out a dark chuckle that only angered her further. "That's not Jedi."

Rey gaped at him, too enraged to speak. Was he insinuating that she-

"Yes." He bit and she threw a fist. She wasn't tall enough to reach his jaw so she went for his throat, but he caught her wrist easily. "The great hope of the Resistance, The Last of the Jedi, uses the dark side and doesn't even know it."

Rey punched toward his right side with her other arm but he grabbed that wrist too. She tried to pull free but his hold just tightened. Her skin grew hot under his touch, but not in pain, just a strange sort of warmth that leaked into her veins. His eyes bore into hers and he leaned down close to her face. "Ever given into your anger, Rey?"
Strangely, that seemed to sober her up, and she instantly regretted her behavior. She let out a hard
breath that fluttered the strands of hair hanging in his face. She had tried to hit him. She couldn't
believe she'd tried to hit him.

"Are you done with your tantrum?" He said, straightening once more.

Rey pulled her hands from his grip and immediately felt the absence of his warmth. "You're one to
talk."

He didn't smile but his eyes lit up in a dark sort of amusement. They were still standing close together
and Rey felt the force move between them in quick jumps and sparks.

"That was-" She stammered, trying to find the words to apologize. "I shouldn't have done that. I'm-

He cut her off. "Do you feel better?"

Rey took another deep breath and was surprised at the answer bubbling up inside her. "A little bit,
yeah."

He gave her a half smirk. "Then don't mention it."

The pull she felt toward him was overpowering. Rey instantly became aware that she was close
enough to feel his body heat through the thin fabric covering her arms. She could see every shade of
amber and gold decorating his irises. Feel the hunger of the Force as it begged them to abandon this
combative arrangement. She'd felt it before, but never this strong.

Clearing his throat politely, he took a step back to put more space between them. Rey glanced
around to find the source of his embarrassment, and saw Chewie peering curiously around the
corner. He threw them an amused sort of growl that Rey wasn't sure she understood correctly and
then disappeared once again.

"What did he say?" She asked.

He coughed awkwardly, "No Idea."

Rey felt the lie that time. However, before she could announce her observation, he turned on his heel
and strode back down the hall. Leaving Rey feeling like the hole in her chest had doubled in size.

Chapter End Notes

chewie: rararraggrrrrah
translation: just fuck already

we are officially over 13,000 words and over 55 kudos!!! thank you guys so much for
reading, i can't tell you how much your positive feedback means to me <33
Chapter 15

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

y'all, ben is really struggling. i don't know how to write anything but angst. its a problem.

small retcon in chapter 11:
So what was left? He was a man without a name or a family or a purpose. He'd thought he could fill the void with Rey by his side, but she'd betrayed him. She'd left him alone and unconscious, and he didn't know if he could ever forgive her for it.

chapter inspired by Too Afraid to Love You by The Black Keys

This was dangerous territory.

He hadn't intended to storm off, but the ache that spread through his chest when Rey searched his eyes, had made it hard to breathe. He struggled to think what would have happened if Chewie hadn't interrupted. The pull of the Force flowing between them had been overpowering. The intensity of it, creating within him a basic instinct to reach out and touch her again, to open up to her again, to be whole again.

One day with her. That's all it had taken to reduce him to a lovesick akk dog.

It was infuriating.

He didn't remember deciding to befriend her once more. It had just happened, and completely against his better judgment. Where Rey was concerned, all of his defense mechanisms and self-control completely disappeared. He was left exposed. Vulnerable. Raw. Weak.

The self-loathing bloomed deep within his chest and he was overtaken by the violent need to lash out, to beat the conflicted parts of himself into submission. He hated himself, hated how he felt about her, hated the galaxy for its constant reminder that, try as hard as he could, he would never be able to hate her.

He unhooked his lightsaber from his belt and ignited it. There was a sapling swaying gently in the breeze, water droplets glistening on its leaves from the downpour. It looked so peaceful and healthy, so defenseless. So easy to reduce to a pile of ash.

Twirling his weapon once, he felt the vibration in the handle, heard the hum as it cut through the air around him. He pulled the blade back, intending to cut the tree in two, but balked.

This is what Kylo Ren would do.

Feed the dark side until his vision went red around the edges. Cultivate his anger, until his decision making was fueled by nothing but his delusions to make himself something better than what he was.

He let out a roar of frustration. Turning, he disengaged his saber, and threw it at a large trunk.
Letting out a hard breath, he tried and failed, to calm down. He felt everything so severely, each emotion bubbling beneath the surface, always ready to boil over.

Balance. That what all his stupid lessons with his uncle had been about, right? Powerful light, powerful darkness. The Force was a tension, always in search of stabilization, harmony, equality.

He ran a rough hand through his hair and tried to be rational. To give in fully to the dark side would be illogical, especially when he had the might of both at his fingertips.

A loud snap of a branch breaking sounded behind him and he felt the familiar prickle on the back of his neck as she approached.

"What are you doing!" Rey asked indignantly as she burst through a large bush.

"Why did you leave?" He spat before he could stop himself.

She blinked at him. "What?"

"I asked you to stay, and you left. Why?"

Her posture immediately changed, her expression becoming defensive. "You know why."

"Tell me anyway."

There was a moment of silence where they stared at each other, Rey's mouth slightly agape in surprise as he pleaded with her to tell him the truth. For months, this moment had haunted him. When she would finally admit why she'd left him alone in that destroyed throne room.

"You wanted to burn everything to the ground!" She exclaimed, her tone indicating it was the most ridiculous thing she had ever heard. "That's not how leaders should be chosen! Killing your way to the top, putting yourself in charge because you think you are superior to everyone else, because you have an ability that others don't.."

He stayed silent, absorbing her words. Listening to his failings from her point of view.

She took a step toward him, gesturing with her hands wildly. "You didn't kill Snoke to liberate me or the galaxy from his brutality. You did it for yourself. You saw an opportunity to seize power and you took it... and I couldn't go down that road with you, no matter how much I-"

Rey stopped talking abruptly and the inner turmoil was rolling off her in waves.

"How much you what?" He asked urgently, taking an involuntary step towards her. She shook her head and he saw tears pooling in her eyelashes.

"How much you what?" He asked again, growing agitated.

Her breath hitched and her voice was thick with the effort of holding back tears. "No matter how much I love you."
The words hung in the air around them. Rey had denied her feelings for so long, that she had surprised even herself at admitting them. Meanwhile, he hadn't said a word, hadn't moved a muscle. Just stood there trying to reconcile the fact that she could refuse to stay by his side and still care for him.

"I know that I shouldn't," She blinked and felt the tears spill down her cheeks. "But I do, and I can't stop."

Rey stared at his bewildered expression, the apprehension growing in her chest with every passing second.

The furrow in his brow deepened as he reached a tentative hand out and brushed his thumb along her cheek. His touch lingered against her skin, leaving a trail of warmth behind as he tipped her head back. Rey held her breath as he leaned in closer, his eyes never leaving hers.

"Neither can I-" He breathed, then closed the distance between them, covering her lips with his own. Rey's shock gave way to surrender as the sensation spread through her. She didn't know what she expected, maybe the Force roaring in their ears or the sky breaking open in protest, but the world went quiet around them. The forest still and silent. Rey sunk into the feeling of kissing him, finally understanding what it meant to taste someone and know you will never get enough.

He kissed her again, and the feeling of being breathless, of being weightless had never been so welcome. Even with her eyes closed, her awareness seemed heightened and she felt him move his other hand to her waist to pull her closer. He held her firmly to him, taking another half step toward her so their bodies melded as seamlessly as their lips.

Not to be outdone, Rey moved her hands up his chest and knotted her fingertips in the soft waves at the nape of his neck. Seconds or minutes or hours could have passed and she wouldn't have known the difference. Is this what the absence of loneliness felt like? This feeling of being one half of something finally made whole? If so, she was never letting him go again.

Rey felt the Force then, swirling in an easy rhythm around them. It was so strange, the energy flowing around, through and between. It seemed to hum with the rightness of it. One word echoing faintly in the back of her mind.

Balance.

They broke apart briefly, stunned by the Force announcing its revelation, and he leaned his forehead against her own.

"Rey-" He hummed her name and she felt the unsaid words churn deep within him. The intensity of it was overwhelming and fresh tears pricked the corner of her eyes.

"What are we going to tell Chewie?" She murmured against his lips.

"Don't you ever," He said, feigning irritation. "Mention Chewie while kissing me, again."
Rey let out a laugh, and leaned up on her tiptoes to pull his face back down to hers. "Deal."

As if on cue, a loud roar echoed through the trees and he buried his face in the crook of her neck. "I'm going to kill him."

His breath on her skin was wonderfully distracting and sent shivers through her bloodstream, but something about Chewie's urgency bothered her. He howled again and this time she heard him more clearly.

Her stomach dropped. "Something's wrong."

They stared at each other and he brushed a stray strand of hair from her face. Rey didn't want this moment to end. This incredible, isolated moment where the chaos was a distant memory and the war didn't have anything to do with them.

Rey lived in the real world, however, and it seemed it was calling them back. They ran through the undergrowth, back towards the ship as a thousand worst possible scenarios flashed through her head.

Chapter End Notes

i'm sorry i just saw we were at 80 kudos and now i'm cryin. i love y'all thank you so much for reading!
When they burst through the trees into the clearing, Chewie gave them quite the earful. Between hollering at them for disappearing and his terrible annunciation, it took a little longer than normal to discern what exactly had happened. However, he eventually slowed down enough to get the point across.

They had received a transmission from the Resistance. The attack on Corellia was happening in sixteen hours.

Their power levels were still dangerously low and so they set to work putting out the solar panels. Chewie gave him an evaluating stare as they scrambled to get the chargers plugged into the back of the ship, but didn't comment. He got the feeling, the wookie was wondering why he all the sudden decided to chip in.

It irritated him to no end.

Unfortunately, once the fuel cells began charging, all they could do was wait. Rey wanted to make contact with Alpha Base for more information but it would be at least two hours before they had enough power for a long range transmission. The panic and anxiety that she gave off was crushing.

She needed a distraction.

Trudging back into the forest, he found what he was looking for in minutes. His lightsaber was actually in better condition than he'd expected. His ignition was busted and the outer casing was cracked but the internal structures looked salvageable.

He found Rey sitting at the base of the walkway, knees pulled up to her chest and staring off at nothing.

"Can you fix it?" He asked, holding the weapon out to her.

She looked up at him curiously. Reaching out she plucked it from his hands and turned it over, taking in the damage. "What did you do to it?"

"Threw it at a tree." He said simply. Rey let out a reluctant laugh and he smiled in spite of himself.

Getting to work immediately, Rey pried open the hilt and began examining the internal assemblage.

"The power grid isn't damaged, so that's good. The dampener needs reconnected, I'll have to rewire
the ignition..." She mused, sounding preoccupied and he let himself relax a bit. She was now well and fully distracted.

He didn't know how long they sat like that. While Rey worked, he watched Chewie roast a rodent looking animal over a small fire. Apparently, fed up with field rations.

He was thinking about Corellia. He was certain the attack was in retaliation for breaking the fleet contracts. The whole matter had Hux written all over it. He could probably guess their targets with little recon and he debated on whether he should tell Rey his hunch or wait and try to barter with the Resistance so that he wouldn't be executed on sight.

"Why are red crystals forbidden?" Rey wondered, and he was pulled out of his daze.

"How do you know that?" He asked, surprised. She plucked the power source from its coupling and held it up to reflect the sunlight.

"I read it," Her voice changed, and she hesitated before continuing. ".somewhere."

He held out his hand, and she dropped the crimson stone in his palm. "It's because they're synthetic."

"Synthetic?" Rey echoed, disbelieving. She looked intently at the crystal, as if seeing it for the first time.

"Kyber crystals are unusually attuned to the Force, that's why they have such deep connections with their wielders," He closed his fist around the stone, felt it's jagged edges pressed into his palm, felt the gentle pulse of the Force that beat from within. "The story goes that when Force-Users split into factions, the light and the dark, the Jedi kept the kyber crystals under strict guard. To keep them away from the darksiders..."

She was staring at him, eyes wide, soaking up every word. He felt an odd sort of satisfaction at being able to share this ancient legend with her.

"But the Sith became so powerful with the Force, that they found a way to forge crystals through their own manipulations. Over time, it became tradition for all darksiders, as a rite of passage. Therefore, strongly discouraged by the Jedi, who considered the practice," He paused, looking for the right word. "-Unnatural."

Rey's brow furrowed in confusion as his story ended. "Wait," She said, grabbing at his hand and looking at the crystal more closely. "You made this?"

He hummed his assent.

"Then how come its damaged," She ran a gentle finger lightly down it's edge. "There's a crack right down the middle."

It took him an extra moment to answer, having to convince himself it was okay to share this with her. "Snoke said it was because I was weak." He let out a shallow sigh, "Maybe I was. It could have been that I was so riddled with conflict, that I couldn't focus on the task. Or maybe I just didn't follow the instructions correctly-"

He handed the crystal back to her and his touch lingered on her fingertips, relishing in the tingling sensation that spread from where her skin met his.

"But I like to think," He continued dryly. "That there is something so inherently flawed on the inside, that no matter what I do, it's defective."
"How very poetic of you." She said sarcastically and began her repairs once more. He sat in silence, sorting through his feelings about willingly sharing something so deeply personal. It didn't feel good, but it did feel necessary, and there was a small burden lifted from his shoulders. A slight loosening in his chest. Perhaps, even a little bit of trust gained.

He thought they would lapse into quiet again, but Rey apparently had other ideas.

"I think everyone is flawed. Maybe some more than others-" She gave him a wry grin. "But all of us are imperfect. It's what makes us human."

Thinking on it for a moment, he decided he couldn't fault her for trying to make him feel better about himself. Sure, everyone had their failings, but he was broken. It was only a matter of time before she found out how much.

"How very poetic of you." He repeated back to her.

In response, she elbowed him firmly in the ribs.
Morning bled into afternoon as Rey realized they hadn't even been on Takodana for a full day. Her hope was that the ship would have enough power for one jump, just enough to get them to Corellia, before the First Order attack. Thankfully, the sun had broken through the morning cloud cover and the fuel cells were charging steadily. At this rate, they would be ready to leave by nightfall. She assumed the Resistance would be getting ready to defend the planet from General Hux's sadistic idea of justice, but she needed confirmation of the plan first.

She had just begun punching in her communication codes when she sensed him watching her.

"Do you mind if I join you?" He asked quietly from behind her.

"Oh," Rey said taken aback, she hadn't thought to include him. She still wasn't even sure if he was coming or not. "Not at all."

She flipped the switches for outgoing and incoming transmissions and waited for her signal to be received.

"Alpha Base, this is Trixie. Do you copy?"

A short moment passed in silence, then static and Rey allowed herself to breathe again. Their communications systems were back online.

"Trixie this is Alpha Base. We read you loud and clear." It was a woman's voice, a young woman's voice by the sound of it and Rey racked her brain trying to remember who worked in communications.

"Rey this is Lieutenant Connix. It's good to hear from you. Did you receive our earlier transmission?" She was pleasant but professional and Rey finally put a face with the voice on the other end.

"Yes we did. We can be in Corellia in eight hours. Do we have a designated rendezvous?"

"One moment," Connix stammered and Rey heard her voice distantly conversing with someone else. "Commander Dameron would like to speak with you."

"Rey-" Poe said over the comm. "I've let Finn know we've got you on the line. He should be here any minute, but basically what we've got is a bunch of small tips that we've pieced together into a larger plot. The First Order is going to try to dismantle most of the infrastructure of Corellia's manufacturing districts."

She didn't know anything about the system except that it made ships, loads of them. "So what can we do? Can we stop them?"

"Right now the objective is to avoid as many civilian casualties as possible, but the whole planet is
one big factory. We're talking massive production plants across both hemispheres-

He cut Poe off mid-sentence, "The First Order's goal simple, cause as much destruction and casualties as they can, to force the Corellians' back into servitude."

Rey's mouth snapped shut in surprise and the line went silent for several moments.

"Is that who I think it is?" Poe asked, and his voice sounded like it was straining to remain calm.

"They'll concentrate the heavy fire on Coronet." He continued like he didn't hear the last transmission and Rey sat stunned. He was actually giving them intel. Real intel. "They can cause as much destruction in the capital as they want, while still leaving the plants operational. Negotiations fell through and Corellia no longer maintains the First Order fleet. Hux is going to use this as an example of what happens if you don't comply."

"Listen, Kylo-"

He cut Poe off. "My name is Ben."

When their eyes met, Rey couldn't stop the lump from rising in the back of her throat or the soft smile that played at her lips.

"Okay, Ben-" Poe said scathingly. "Why should I believe a word you say."

He sat back in the chair, a vision of composure. "It's simple really. I tell you everything I know and you don't kill me."

The connection went silent for so long that Rey was about to check the signal before static crackled once more.

"I don't have the authority to make that kind of agreement."

"Well, then find me someone who does and I'll talk to them."

Rey could practically hear Poe roll his eyes but another voice sounded over the comm and Rey grinned. "Rey? What's going on? Why does Poe look like he's about to pop a blood vessel?"

"Ben here-" Poe jabbed, his tone growing more strained. "Was telling us the First Order's master plan."

"Whose Ben?" Finn asked quickly. The connection went quiet once more and Rey assumed Poe was explaining the new developments.

"Rey-" Poe started, sounding desperate. "Do you trust this information? Do you trust him?"

She met his gaze over the control panel, his face was passive but she knew that he was waiting to hear her answer as anxiously as Poe.

"I do."

Ben gave her a small smile as Poe let out an exasperated sigh. "Then let's get to work."

Chapter End Notes
we're over 100 kudos i'm-

thank you guys so much
Chapter 19

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

this chapter is pure selfishness. UPDATED 10/3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ben's patience was wearing thin by the time he was done being questioned by the Resistance. He'd given them everything he could think of regarding Hux's motivations and they had exhausted an entire hour talking about star destroyer vulnerabilities, ground troop procedures and Coronet escape routes.

Rey seemed confident that they had a good plan. Ben wasn't so sure.

He'd found out his own mother had been the reason the contracts fell through in the first place. Meeting with former Corellian senators who still had pull in the manufacturing business, convincing them to stand up to the First Order. Leia had been a Rebel till the end. He smiled sadly at the thought.

They were outside again, sharing a ration between them. It tasted terrible. He finally understood why Chewie insisted on eating rats. Rey had repaired his lightsaber, using her technical knowledge and a little bit of the Force, just to reshape the outer casing back to its original form. While she had worked, Ben realized she had fixed it in half the time it would have taken him to do it himself.

"Spar with me." He said suddenly.

She looked over at him, stunned. He might as well try out his newly refurbished weapon and he was itching to see hers in action.

"I need to check the motivator and the long range scanner.." Rey mumbled through a mouthful of bread. The loaf had been the driest thing he had ever tasted, he didn't know how she ate that stuff.

Ben stood, brushing off his pants and called his lightsaber too him lazily, it flew into his hand with a snap. "We've got a few hours, let's see if you're as good of a mechanic as you think."

"I've never sparred with someone for practice before.." It sounded more like a question than a statement and Ben knew he was close to convincing her.

"I'll go easy on you."

Smirking, she stood and her saberstaff flew out of her bag and into her hands. "Are there any rules?"

"Yes," He urged. "Don't kill me."

They both ignited their blades and began to circle each other slowly.
"This seems a bit dangerous." Rey said, assuming a defensive position.

He jabbed at her and she blocked it easily. "What good is practice if there aren't any stakes?"

They began a steady rhythm, feeling the Force flow through them. Where Ben thrust, she blocked. When Rey cut, he dodged. If it was possible, she was even more formidable with her staff than the traditional saber, using both ends to block and swipe. Though she was doing a good job of keeping him at a distance, knowing he was better at close range.

"You're holding back." He prodded, trying to goad her into making a mistake. Their blades connected and sent vibrations out in all directions but annoyingly, she spun out of his reach again.

Rey laughed and it sent a thrill through his chest. "Afraid I'll beat you again?"

"Actually," He swung hard, hoping he might gain the upper hand with raw strength. "I like to think of that as a draw."

She let out an indignant shriek and made a swipe at his head that he ducked easily. He switched up his tactic, trying to hang back and get her on the offensive. She took the bait, spinning her staff in circles around her.

It wasn't long before they were both out of breath. Ben knew he was getting sloppy, but she was giving him longer and longer openings. He just had to outlast her.

Finally, he got his chance. There was a gap in her rotation and he slashed at her throat at the same time she cut at his side. Their blades stopped inches from their intended targets simultaneously. The only sound was the hum of the sabers as they cracked and sparked the air around them.

Something else sparked between them as a smile spread across Rey's face. Sweat was dripping into Ben's eyes and his hair was drenched, he could see the effort of their spar glisten on her skin as well. They were standing so close together that he could see the dusting of freckles across her nose and cheeks. He'd never noticed them before.

He shot her a lopsided grin. "Guess this is a draw too."

"I beat you the first time." She insisted, disengaging her blades and wiping the moisture from her forehead. Her chest heaved as she panted for breath. It was incredibly distracting. "I've got witnesses."

Ben turned away to hide his growing smile, it was too easy to provoke her. He clipped his lightsaber back to his belt and began to undo his jacket. "Please tell me the sonics still work in this rust bucket."

"Don't change the subject-"

"I'll flip you for it. You know it takes an hour to recharge between cycles."

"Absolutely not," She laughed, closing the distance between them. "I'm going first."

Her closeness caught him off guard and his chest grew hot at the memory of her mouth on his. Her smug expression turned to one of anticipation when she caught the look in his eyes. Ben's heart pounded against his rib cage, from their sparring match or her proximity, he didn't know.

He was struck by how vibrant she was, how full of life. The Force's sense of humor must be wicked, because not only was she his equal in power and ability, she was his perfect counterpart, his exact
opposite. By all accounts, they should be the greatest of enemies but-

Where he was filled with bitterness, she was full of kindness. Where his insecurity was crippling, she was self-assured. Where his anger was debilitating, hers was invigorating.

Rey was everything he had ever needed but didn't deserve.

She must have got a sense of where his thoughts were headed because Rey leaned up on her tiptoes, and hovered there for a moment. She glanced between his eyes and his mouth, a small smile playing at the edges of her lips.

Not able to stand it any longer, he dove in to meet her.

Their lips pressed firmly together, their hands discarding weapons and clinging to each other, their bodies molding impossibly close. He drank her in, like a parched man drinks water. Ben had tried so hard, for so long, not to need her. To write her off as an obsession or an infatuation, but her confession had lit a fire in his chest. The flames sparked and scorching their way through his anger and self-doubt, leaving much gentler emotions in it's wake.

She loved him. Despite everything. Despite his own best efforts. She loved him.

And he loved her, more than his own life.

He knotted a hand in her hair, while she fisted her hands in his jacket, occasionally brushing the skin that was peeking through his open collar. When Ben opened her mouth with his own, Rey responded eagerly and he had to hold back the moan that was threatening to escape his throat.

He would never tire of this, of her, of knowing someone and being known in return. Ben had been starved his whole life and it was only until he'd met Rey that he fully realized how much.

They only broke apart when they were both gasping for air. The burn in his lungs was welcome and familiar. Although, usually following a burst of rage.

In his opinion, this was a much better use of energy.

Rey trailed her hands up his chest and neck, resting her palms gently against his cheeks. Her expression was hard to read, her thoughts and emotions even more difficult to discern as they were currently tangled up with his own.

She ran a thumb over the damaged skin that cut across his face and Ben closed his eyes against the sensation. The skin surrounding his scar was puckered and almost numb, her ghost of a touch lingering. Turning his head, he pressed a feather light kiss into her palm before taking her calloused hands in his own.

The Force was calling to them. Both of them. Light and Dark churning around them violently, surrounding them in a sphere of power and sensation. It felt eerily similar to when their connection activated from across the galaxy.

Staring into Rey's hazel eyes he wondered whether the raw energy would be their salvation or their destruction.

As Rey pulled his face back down to hers, Ben decided he didn't care.

Chapter End Notes
updated 10/3 - sorry guys, posted this a little premature, the scene at the end of the chapter is a late addition. i really wanted to do a kiss from ben's pov.
Chapter 20

Chapter by Jensenackals, princcsleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

Sorry for the delay in posting! I took a couple of days to map out the rest of the story. I had some seriously cool ideas but I wanted to make sure I could do them justice.

Please read the updated chapter 19!!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Her scrap load was so heavy, but she couldn't stop.

The sand was so hot and her legs were so tired. It was such a chore to move. Step after step, her body moved slower and slower, but she had to keep going.

Her feet began sinking, the sand scorching her shins as she tried to pull herself out. The more she struggled however, the deeper she found herself. Soon, the sand was up around her waist. Rey was panicking. The pit pulling her further and further under.

She gulped down one last gasp of air before a wave of sand washed over her face and she was plunged into darkness. She couldn't breathe, she couldn't move-

And then she was falling, landing in a heap on a polished black floor. The echo of multiple weapons being drawn sounded around her. Suddenly alert, and able to move her limbs at a normal speed, she stood. There were five- no six, people huddled in a semi-circle. Masks covering their faces and an assortment of weapons on their person. All of them looked past her, ready to attack.

She heard a lightsaber ignite behind her and turned to see Ben, fury clearly evident on his handsome face. A red glow lighting up his features as he settled into an offensive stance.

The room spun so fast, Rey could barely keep her balance as the scene changed around her.

A large crowd was gathered at dusk, candles lit for some sort of demonstration. As she looked closer, there seemed to be a line of people cutting their way through the congregation. They were following a woman laid out on a floating cot, clearly expecting a child by the size of her belly. The realization hit her as she took in the mournful faces and bittersweet music.

This was a funeral.

A dozen questions filtered through Rey's mind as she watched the processional pass, a deep sadness washing over her. Who was she? How did she die? Did the child survive? Where was her family?

"It was my fault."

Rey looked around sharply and came face to face with a young man in old fashioned robes, he had shaggy brown hair and a scar that cut over his right eye. He was rather frightening, with an agonized
expression and power radiating off of him.

"It was my fault." He said again, watching the casket float through the crowd. "And she couldn't save me..."

Rey looked back at the woman with the swollen belly. She was incredibly beautiful, with dark curls spilling out around her serene face, a carved wooden necklace clutched in her hands.

"Maybe he can save you-"

Rey jerked awake, her cheek stuck to the back of her hand as she sat up from the game table in the common area. She tried to hold onto details but the dream was slippery. When did she fall asleep? The last thing she remembered was waiting for Ben to finish up in the refresher so they could put away the solar panels.

As if summoned, Ben came around the corner, his jacket and belts hung from his arm as he toweled off his damp hair. "What's wrong?" He asked, stopping in the doorway.

*Maybe he can save you*

"Nothing-" Rey said, shaking the haunting words from her mind. "Bad dream."

He looked at her curiously but didn't press it further.

Chapter End Notes

yall - i am seriously overwhelmed by your love of this fic. thank you so much!!! also i'm really interested in hearing where you guys think the story is going. sound off in the comments. LOVE YOU TONS!!
Chapter 21

Chapter by jensenackals, princessleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

yall this chapter has my whole ass heart

MAKE SURE TO READ THE UPDATED CHAP 19!!!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ben slammed the compartment door shut after loading the panels into their slots.

As soon as the last of the crates were loaded, they would be ready to leave. They had worked in silence for the last thirty minutes or so, Rey obviously preoccupied as they loaded up the Falcon. She was hiding something, he just didn't know what.

Opening and closing a few crates as he went, Ben was looking for empty space to store a few of the spare parts and broken components during take off. He'd found a few viable options for a particularly large scanner piece but nothing for the shield conductor.

He began going through a few hidden smuggling spaces. Thinking most of them were surely empty as the ship hadn't been used for smuggling in years. He stopped dead however, when he pulled opened a drawer and was met with several leather bound books, half hidden under a thermal blanket.

The world went foggy around him, all his senses on edge as he read the script engraved on the spines. They couldn't be here, these relics of the old religion. It was impossible. He had burnt the temple to the ground, training aids and texts with it. Unless... But they couldn't be. Could they?

Ben was utterly frozen, stuck in a crouch with his hand hovering inches above the weatherd manuals. He could feel the ancient knowledge held within their pages in the air around him. He could hear the faint whispers of Jedi long past, who had become one with the Force, begging him to listen to their call.

Footsteps echoed through the hall, followed by a keen awareness of Rey's presence. She quieted the roaring in his ears ever so slightly, but in its wake, his anger grew.

"Where did you get these." Ben murmured, his voice deadly as Rey rounded the corner into the common area. He hadn't taken his eyes from the drawers contents but he knew she'd heard him when he felt her trepidation through their bond.

"I-" She started but he cut her off quickly, his rage growing at a steady pace.

"I-' She started but he cut her off quickly, his rage growing at a steady pace.

"And don't lie to me." Ben turned to face her and Rey set down the crate she was carrying, eyes darting between him and the books sitting in the hidden compartment.

"I took them." She said simply, her words were carefully even, tone measured in an effort to keep
him calm.

It wasn't working.

A small part of him was trying to be a voice of reason. Remind him that Rey had every right to have the original Jedi texts in her possession. The larger part was furious that she'd willingly kept these after everything he'd told her about his past. He knew it was irrational but the treacherous thoughts kept coming, a constant bombardment of betrayal.

These weren't tools for learning, they were a reminder of why he'd been sent away from home. The Jedi, their power with the light side of the force, was the reason Snoke had targeted him from the moment he'd been conceived. His deviation from the strict adherence to their warped standards of purity, the reason his own uncle had tried to murder him.

"You took them." He repeated, standing to his full height. Rey took a few steps toward him but he didn't want her closeness. He wanted an explanation.

"I had too-" Rey's eyes were pleading with him to understand as she spoke. "I didn't know if I would ever go back to that island and I'd only just begun to understand what all of this means for me. How I fit-"

Ben closed his eyes and sucked in a ragged breath. "You're going to pass it on, aren't you?"

Rey didn't answer but her brows furrowed and she let out a defeated sigh.

His voice grew hard, feeling her unspoken answer before he'd even finished speaking. "You're going to train another generation. Restore the Jedi order."

She stayed silent and if it was possible, it infuriated him even more.

"Rey they take children from their families!" Now he was shouting, bellowing in her face to force her to listen. "Brainwash them into believing their emotions are the enemy, that their attachments make them weaker, that only complete separation from the lives of the people around them, gives clarity-"

"It wouldn't have to be like that." She said quietly.

"Oh really," Ben spat, throwing his hands in the air in an effort to keep from shaking some sense into her. "What would it be like?"

"It can change!" She yelled back frantically. "It can be voluntary or we wait until they are of age.. When we restore the republic-"

"The republic," He scoffed and ran a shaking hand down his face in frustration. "Rey, democracy doesn't work. It's chaos. Policy is secondary to politics. Nothing is enforced, no decisions are ever actually made."

She interrupted him, her expression growing hard. "That's Snoke talking."

"It isn't." He bit, leaning down close to her face.

"Oh, and your way is so much better?" She didn't back down, if anything she leaned in closer to him, her voice gaining a sharp edge. "The Empire, The First Order, it's all the same. It's still one person in power for no other reason than for the sake of power."
Ben straightened and looked down at her condescendingly. "You're incredibly naive."

"And you're blinded by hatred." She fumed.

Shaking his head slightly, he paced away from her, attempting to release some of the tension in his chest. He could feel her disappointment and frustration scattered around them. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her hug her middle anxiously and Ben immediately regretted shouting at her.

"We have to go." She murmured solemnly and gave him one last dejected look before turning and heading down the hall toward the cockpit.

He tried to send his own remorse through their bond but he couldn't tell it was received on her end.

Chapter End Notes

guys we are so close to the end of part 1 it's crazy! i am going to post the next four chapters all at once because i want you to be able to read it all together... its much better that way i promise but there might be a few extra days before i update. thanks for understanding. LOVE YALL SO MUCH YOU HAVE NO IDEA.
Chapter Summary

ok next couple chapters are posted. i want to make this very clear, neither Ben or Rey know how to have a healthy relationship... yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

"You don't have to come with us," Rey assured as she slung her bag over her shoulder. "I'm sure there are plenty of places to disappear on Coronet."

Ben looked up from where he was sitting against the far wall. They had barely spoken on the trip, Rey electing to let him stew in his warped world views, while her and Chewie remained on the bridge.

He looked at her strangely but Rey didn't relent. She'd realized that Ben hadn't actually agreed to accompany them, Rey had just assumed that he would see it through after helping them formulate their plan. But she wasn't going to have him with her out of some corrupt sense of loyalty or because he didn't have any better options. She needed a firm choice, and if he chose to leave, she would let him.

It might kill her but she would let him.

"You can go with the evacuees escaping the city or-" The grip on her bag strap tightened as he stood and it became harder to speak around the tightness in her throat. "I'm sure a whole multitude of ships will be damaged or stolen in the attack, you could take one without anyone the wiser..."

Rey could feel his apprehension and she braced herself for his reprimand, her mind flashing through all of the hateful things he could say..

_The Resistance is a futile attempt at restoring a broken system._
_She was wasting herself, supporting a band of war criminals who had no idea how to govern._
_Hope in ancient ideals would never win against military advantage and brute strength._
_Let the past die-

"I'm staying with you." His deep voice cut through her pessimism, his intensity making her breath hitch.

"You'll help us?" Rey breathed, she was finding it difficult to speak around the emotions blooming in her chest.

Ben took a few steps toward her, his expression turning hard. "I don't give one flying kriff about the Resistance. I'm staying with _you._"

Rey held his gaze, the shock of his pronouncement rendering her speechless. This wasn't what she'd expected. After he'd been so disgusted with her for having the Jedi texts and for believing in
democracy, she had assumed this would be where they parted ways. Rey could feel the emotions pass between them. Yearning, hunger, longing- They were so strong that she knew in that moment, she would never have been able to let him go without damaging a part of herself in the process.

It was terrifying how deeply she could feel. Frightening, that fate or destiny or the Force, had brought together two people who couldn't possibly be more different, and cursed them to fall in love.

All fear disappeared, however, when he reached out a tentative hand and fit his palm around hers.

"And-" He continued, tracing a gentle thumb across her knuckles. "I want to see the look on Hux's face when I run him through."

Rey scowled at him and he rolled his eyes impatiently.

"Fine," Ben huffed half-heartedly. "I want to see the look on his face when we kidnap him and hold him for ransom."

It was hard to hold back her smirk as he forced the words out. "Much better." She chuckled.

A soft shudder went through the ship as they slowed and then touched down. Rey hadn't realized they were already in Coronet. Re-adjusting her bag with one hand, she gave Ben a tight squeeze with the other before letting go. She immediately missed his weight and warmth against her fingers.

Chewie met them by the ramp door and Rey took a deep breath, steeling herself against the responsibility that now sat upon her and Ben's shoulders.

The wind whipped her hair as they disembarked the Falcon and stepped onto the deserted landing pad. The harsh air was a stark contrast from the warm humidity they had left behind on Takodana. The city sprawled out below them, a web of deserted streets and buildings eerily still against the bright sky. Rey had never been to Coronet, or any city this size, but she had a feeling it was typically much more active than this. The Resistance must have already begun the evacuations.

Chewie was close behind her, followed by Ben, who was watching her intently. His dark hair and attire were a stark contrast to the afternoon sun.

"We need to find you new clothes." Rey said over her shoulder.

Ben pinched his jacket and looked himself up and down. "What's wrong with my clothes?"

"You don't exactly look like a civilian." Rey scoffed and continued walking. He would stick out like a sore thumb in his all black ensemble, not to mention draw more attention to himself while they tried to sneak through the tower.

They approached the double doors to the manufacturer's headquarters. This was where they were supposed to meet the resistance, where the First Order's attack was rumored to begin. The board of directors had been told to expect a meeting, but the Resistance knew it was a farce. A cover to get troops on the ground to begin General Hux's attack.

*Supreme Leader Hux's attack*, Rey corrected herself and an involuntary shudder went through her at the thought of a man like that in charge.

The blast doors opened with a hiss and Rey saw a small group of people jogging toward them, Finn leading the charge. Rey quickened her pace when their eyes met and they collided in a bone crushing hug.
Burying her face in his shoulder, Rey breathed in the flood of relief at having him here. He was okay. Alive and okay. She hadn't seen him since he'd left with Poe for the outer rim missions and had to hold back the lump gathering in her throat.

"Hi-" Finn breathed in her ear.

Rey smiled widely. "Hi."

"You okay?" Finn asked, holding her at arms length, eyes flashing behind her. Rey's momentary sense of peace came crashing down and she nodded through a shallow breath. Now came the hard part... Making sure these unlikely allies stayed allies.

Chewie and Ben had caught up and Rey could feel Ben standing close behind her. A small wave of possessiveness tried to surround her but Rey pushed back and it relented. Preoccupied, she hadn't noticed the glare Finn was giving off, or the hatred welling up inside him.

"If you betray us-" Finn snarled, addressing Ben directly and trying to shove Rey behind him. "I'll kill you."

Ben smirked. "No doubt that would be entertaining."

Finn took an aggressive step toward him but Rey jumped in between them, throwing her hands up in either direction.

"Hey!" Rey said forcefully, holding Finn back with a palm to his chest.

*Stop it!* She shot down their connection as she turned to face Ben.

*He started it!* Ben's voice boomed inside her skull and she flinched ever so slightly at his volume but didn't back down. Their gaze held for several long moments before Ben let out a deep breath and visibly relaxed.

*Thank you.* Rey caressed and turned back to Finn.

He was watching the two of them intently, his brow furrowed in confusion, having witnessed their silent conversation.

"Three First Order destroyers made the jump to lightspeed less than thirty minutes ago." Lieutenant Connix spoke up from the group of officers watching the exchange and Rey felt a surge of affection for her. "We are expecting them within the hour."

Rey looked between the two men scathingly before letting her hands drop back to her sides. "Then we're wasting time."

This was going to be harder than she thought.

Connix informed them that the makeshift control room was on the top floor of the building and that the Resistance had already disabled the lifts to herd the storm troopers into the stairwells. It was a tense walk, no one saying a word as they trudged up the six flights of stairs. Rey mostly wondered how many others she would have to stand between, while Ben goaded them into violence. Rey smiled secretly and then caught herself.

*Force save her,* she found his defiance endearing instead of infuriating.

When they reached the top floor landing, Finn held her back, letting Chewie and the officers pass
without a word. Ben scowled at them both but kept moving down the hall, only looking back once, a silent question in his eyes.

**I won't be long.** Rey reassured him and then turned her attention back to Finn.

"What happened out there?" Her best friend asked once the others were out of earshot and he tightened his grip on her upper arms. "You supposedly took Leia on a quest for the Force, which I don't believe for a second, and then you come back with *him.*"

Rey looked down the hall to see Ben standing with Chewie, his arms crossed and mouth turned down in an unmistakable grimace.

"Rey, please-" Finn implored, she could tell he was desperate for answers but she wasn't sure how to give them.

"It's difficult to explain." Rey murmured, trying to figure out where to start. Would he understand if she told him that she'd been speaking with the enemy for months? That she had this indescribable connection to him, that she was in love with him-

"Does he have something on you? Are you his hostage?" Finn asked quickly, his question serious but his tone teasing. "Blink if he is holding you against your will.."

Rey held her eyes open dramatically as she tried not to laugh. They grinned at each other for a fleeting moment and Rey was so thankful to have her best friend back. He was just doing what they'd always done, looked out for each other.

Finn's smile faded sadly. "I just hope you know what you're doing."

Rey pulled him in for a tight hug, "Me too."

As they made their way down the hall, Rey saw Ben staring a spot on the wall looking bored. As she got closer however, she noticed that he was hanging back from the control room purposefully, the interior windows showing her a group of people shooting him furtive glances and whispering to each other over their transmitters and scanners.

Poe was standing just inside the door, speaking quietly to Connix but shifted his attention as Finn and Rey approached.

"Rey-" Poe greeted all business, his eyes only flashing to where Ben stood once. "Are we clear on the plan?"

She nodded, looking to the holopad he had clutched in his hands.

"We've evacuated most of the civilians from the city but we don't have the ground troops to hold downtown." He commanded, zooming in on the building they were occupying. "I'll lead the fleet on a preemptive attack on the destroyers to keep the tie fighters occupied but we can't hold them forever. You and..." Poe seemed unable to say Ben's name. "*him,* will have a limited window to get your hands on Hux and negotiate a ceasefire."

"Understood." Rey said, ignoring the tension that spread as Ben moved closer to look at the diagram of the building in Poe's hands.

"Where are the Board of Directors now?" Ben asked politely. Well, as politely as he could. Poe seemed hesitant to answer him but Ben's gaze held firm. "I just want to speak with them."
Poe looked between Ben and Rey then cocked his head over his shoulder. "Around the corner. Third door on the left."

Turning on his heel, Ben took off down the hall at a brisk pace. Rey looked between Poe and Finn nonplussed, and then followed after him quickly.

"What are you doing?" Rey hissed, finally catching up with his long stride.

Ben cast a glance behind him and he chewed on his tongue before answering. "Something doesn't feel right."

"What do you mean?" Rey breathed, instantly on edge as they turned the corner and the Resistance fighters disappeared from view.

"I don't know, there's something-" He stopped outside the door in question and pressed his ear to the metal. "something I haven't felt in a long time."

He pulled his lightsaber from his belt and Rey looked between it and him utterly confused. He gave her a small nod, silently asking her to stand with him and she consented, pulling her own weapon from her bag and reached out with her feelings, the Force eager to answer her call.

Rey felt his closeness immediately, followed by his apprehension and his... adoration? Why would he be overcome with reverence in a situation like this?

As she looked deeper into his eyes, however, it became evident that he felt this way when he looked at her. She probed a little deeper and Ben opened up to her easily, a cascade of emotions blurring her vision and taking over every nerve in her body.

Giving into her own longing, Rey closed the distance between them and crashed her lips into his. She tried to put as much of her own passion and desire into the kiss without completely losing herself in the process. It was easier said than done, as soon as Ben recovered from the surprise of her actions, he met her with equal fervor.

She felt his devotion as his tongue traced her lower lip. Felt the ache of longing for companionship satisfied as he fisted his hand in the back of her jacket. Felt his fascination, that a person like her could care for a person like him, as his mouth consumed hers.

It ended too soon, the reality of their current predicament like a blow to the chest and they broke apart, both wishing this moment could last just a little bit longer. Rey brushed a lock of hair out of Ben's eyes and vowed that when all this was over, she would finally appease the craving for him that churned in her belly like molten lava.

Ben gave her one last longing look before they both grasped a handle and in unison, pushed the double doors open to the bloodbath that was the meeting room. Bodies were strewn about, collapsed over chairs and scattered throughout the room in pools of blood. The window coverings were shut and the light fixtures damaged beyond repair, sparks occasionally spitting from a live wire.

As Rey's eyes adjusted to the dim lighting she saw six figures on the other side of the room, dispatching the last of the remaining businessmen. They had grotesque helmets covering their faces and various weapons in their hands.

Rey realized with a start that she had seen these warriors twice before, both in dreams.
we are over 20,000 words and over 150 kudos!!! thank you guys so much!

also i am in desperate need of a beta reader! if you are interested please shoot me an ask on tumblr @prinecssleia
Chapter 23

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

archive warnings apply in this chapter...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was impossible, utterly impossible. They had died. Ben had seen them all die at the battle of Mandalore almost six years ago. Yet here they stood, the Knights of Ren reborn. Forcing himself to move past the shock, he felt the air around him singe and spark with darkness but he only recognized one signature. The others were foreign to him.

"Bar the door-" She commanded, her voice distorted through the helmet, but it was definitely her. His teacher, his mentor, his friend. Or so he'd thought. Ben didn't have time to react before the knight on the far left reached out an arm and made a fist. The door behind them crumpled, several pieces of the wall knotting themselves together to block the way in or out. It wouldn't hold Ben and Rey in, but it could definitely keep reinforcements out.

Rey ignited her saberstaff next to him, the blue glow lighting up the space around her. He could feel her courage and it spurred his own.

"Hello Keri." Ben dipped his voice threateningly, the pleasantry laced with malice. "Last time I saw you, you were being sucked into a black hole."

She disengaged her helmet, pulling it away from her face and shot him a devilish grin. "No thanks to you."

Keri Ren's hair was longer, a lighter shade of brown than he remembered and she had new age lines around her eyes and mouth. However, the defiant set of her jaw and her intelligent eyes remained the same. Ben had to fight against the relief that she was alive, reminding himself that she had hidden for six years while he had been alone in his servitude to Snoke.

"Why?" Ben growled, the rage building in him quickly, connecting the dots as to why she was here. "Why work for Hux?"

"We find love in the strangest of places," She quipped, her attention roaming to where Rey stood at his side. "Don't we Kylo?"

The five knights spread out behind Keri, shifting into fighting stances and attempting to surround Ben and Rey from all sides. Ben could see Rey keeping an eye on them, so he kept his attention on Keri, who was by far the strongest of the six. The others were new to the force, he could feel it as it wavered around them, they couldn't control it like he and Rey could. Like Keri could.

"Hux was never going to meet with the board.." Rey said quietly, shifting to stand back to back with Ben as the would be Knights of Ren began to circle them.
Keri joined the slow movement, pulling her electro-plasma spear from her back and twirling it around her. "I'm afraid not."

Ben settled into the realization that they might not make it out of this alive. He ignited his own saber and shifted into an offensive stance. He could feel Rey behind him, feel her muscles contract in anticipation. If he could just keep Keri's focus on him and away from Rey, he had all the confidence in the world that she could handle the novices. Keri, however, was unmatched in her skill with the spear and Ben had no intention of letting her gain the advantage against Rey.

He was growing impatient waiting for them to make the first move, but then, Keri always did like to play with her food.

"What are you waiting for?" Ben taunted angrily. "You can't let us leave here alive, get it over with-"

Keri smiled wickedly and shifted her attention to Rey as she circled them.

No- Was all Ben had time to think before she lunged.

Rey blocked the spear with a grunt and then the others were on them in a flash, pulling Ben's attention away from Rey and to the three masked fighters in front of him. He circumvented their blows easily, dispatching one almost immediately and trying make quick work of the remaining two. His only thought was getting Keri away from Rey.

Although, it looked like she was holding her own well enough without his help. One of her own attackers lay unmoving on the polished floor, a scorched wound through its chest. Bringing one of his own combatants in close enough, Ben grabbed the hilt of his blade before shoving his saber through his neck.

Armed with two weapons now, Ben cut at Keri from behind, while trying to keep an eye on the knight in front of him. She took the bait, slicing at his back which he blocked at the last second. After a few swift movements, Ben gained the upper hand with the man in front of him and plunged his saber into his stomach. Keri let out an anguished shriek and began battling him with renewed vigor.

He could feel her anger and pain as it fed her power but his own was waning. He didn't have the reserves of hatred built up anymore and it would be his downfall.

Distant noises from just outside the ruined doors reached his awareness and he knew the Resistance wouldn't blast through the barricade in time.

Ben had almost begun to panic when he felt something on the edge of his consciousness, a small bud of luminosity. It reached out to him and filled him with a strange sort of peace. He couldn't beat Keri in the darkness, she was too strong, but he didn't have just the dark to pull from anymore. Understanding washed over him and after years of burying it so deep, Ben did the unthinkable and finally let the light back in.

The refreshing tranquility flooded his bloodstream and calmed the anarchy that plagued his every nerve ending. The Force's serenity washed over him in a cool wave like a reclamation of his soul as he evaded Keri's attacks blow for blow.

No longer beating him back with mere force, Keri broke her pattern and twirled her spear around her as a distraction. Ben didn't fall for it and used his own distraction as he cut at her side with his lightsaber. She blocked him efficiently but was left defenseless from his stolen blade, which he used to pierce the gap in her armor underneath her left shoulder.

Keri cried out in agony and collapsed against him, blood oozing from the wound beneath her chest
plate. Ben dug the sword deeper and her surprise was replaced with fury.

"Attachment always was your weakness." She spat through the pain, and taking advantage of his lowered defenses, she thrust her spear into his ribcage.

Chapter End Notes

Keri Ren was inspired by Keri Russel's casting in ep ix. I have no idea what part she will play but I thought she would make a badass force user, thus the idea for her being the last surviving member of the Knights of Ren was born.
Rey finished off her last attacker just in time to see the woman Ben had called Keri, shove her spear into his middle.

"NO!" She screamed and felt a sharp pain in her chest, an echo of the blade piercing his lungs. The woman yanked herself free from the sword in her shoulder and pulled the spear from Ben violently.

"No, no, no," Rey repeated, sprinting across the room and catching Ben before he hit the ground. An almighty blast reverberated around them as the ravaged doors exploded inward, but Rey only registered it in her peripheral, keeping her eyes on Ben as he struggled to breathe. Pressing her hands firmly against his chest to staunch the bleeding, her shock gave way to horror as blood appeared in the corner of his mouth.

"No, you're okay-" She gasped through the pressure gathering behind her eyes. "You're okay. You're okay."

"Rey-" Ben croaked and her face scrunched in anguish when she felt how weak he was. She held onto the little bit of him she could still feel through their bond and didn't let go. This wasn't happening, this couldn't be happening. She couldn't lose him, not when she'd just gotten him back.

"Rey-" He tried again through an awful gurgling in the back of his throat.

"Shhh," The tears were coming full force now, a river of grief threatening to consume her. Rey didn't notice the small group of people huddled just inside the doors. Didn't notice that Keri had disappeared. Didn't notice the ever growing pool of blood surrounding them. The only thing that held her attention was Ben.

He reached up and grabbed at her scarlet stained hand, squeezing it between his cold fingers. Rey had never known his hands to be cold before. He had always been warm, borderline scorching, but she held onto him anyway. Refusing to accept what was right in front of her.

"I-" Ben was struggling to keep his voice audible. "I love you."

His eyes closed slowly and Rey let out miserable cry. "No, no, no.. Please, stay with me. You have to stay with me-"

Holding onto the the small lifeforce still beating in Ben's chest, she didn't relent but started pushing a bit of her own self into him. She felt the grief, pain and anger consume her but she didn't care, as long as that miniscule bit of hope was still there, she would go to whatever lengths to save him.
Fire erupted in her heart as she held onto Ben tighter and tighter, closing her eyes against the burning sensation spreading throughout her body. She let the flames scorch and blister her insides and Ben's heart thumped once in his chest. She gasped against the sensation and envisioned the fire growing to consume them both.

She imagined the blood oozing backwards into his body. Imagined the skin of his chest knitting itself together under her touch. Imagined his lungs filling with breath once more.

Feeling his strength begin to grow, Rey doubled down and gave herself over to the Force completely. The flames were no longer happening to her, she was the flame. She was the source of the burning heat and blessed fire. She was the wielder and the Force obeyed her command.

Ben’s eyes flew open as he sucked in a ragged breath and Rey cried out in relief. He clutched at his chest, feeling for the wound that was no longer there. She grabbed at his hands and held them to her, feeling warmth flood through his skin once more.

"Ben," She sobbed, stoking the fire within them both, the flames continuing to burn underneath her skin. His gaze travelled from his chest to their intertwined fingers before settling on her face. His shock turned to terror however when he met her eyes. "What did you do?"

Rey furrowed her brow in confusion, as she felt his dread pass between them. Why was he worried? Shouldn't he happy?

"Rey, what did you do?" He asked again, his voice taking on a frantic edge.

The glowing embers in her middle roared to life at his ungratefulness. "I saved you!"

She was standing now. She didn't remember standing but took a hesitant step back from him anyway. Her control was wavering as the fire rushed through her bloodstream. She tried to take a steadying breath but the oxygen only fueled the destruction and she felt every spark inside her beg to be unleashed.

"Rey?" An uncertain voice sounded from behind her. She turned and saw Finn moving toward her slowly. His hands were outstretched, approaching her as if she was a rabid animal.

More kindling ignited within her and she finally had the good sense to be afraid, her voice wavering as she murmured, "Stay back-

Finn took another tentative step toward her and Rey put her hands up defensively. "I said stay back!"

Her words echoed around the room and a blast of energy erupted from her fingertips, sending Finn, Poe and the rest of the Resistance careening backwards against the far wall. The burning underneath her skin had become overwhelming and she looked down at her hands in true fear.

Her eyes met Finn's from across the room and he was staring at her in what she could only describe as disgust. Next to him, Poe was equally frightened, along with the several other Resistance officers. Her eyes finally landed on Ben. He hadn't moved from his spot on the floor and he wasn't looking at her in fear... only pity.

Somehow that was worse.

She didn't know what to do, she had never felt power like this, had never felt out of control like this. Her breath came hard and quick as she gasped through the burning in her chest. Taking a step toward the door, she begged Ben to understand.
"Rey, wait!" He called after her but she didn't. She just ran.

Chapter End Notes

i literally cried writing this chapter. im so emo.
Chaos.

That's what it felt like inside her. Utter chaos. Flames scorching through her veins. Her mind unable to focus on one thought for more than a moment, unless she was focusing on the pain.

She had stolen a ship, she didn't know whose it was or where it came from but it was in the hangar bay of the building so she took it. The engines roared to life beneath her touch and she blindly went through the system checks, her body knowing what to do even if her mind was elsewhere.

Rey put the shields up and turned the cloaking mechanisms on. She couldn't have anyone finding her, not yet, not until she figured out what was wrong with her.

As she exited the atmosphere, the darkness of space enveloped her. The bright lights of the cockpit shone against the glass of the bridge and Rey caught a glimpse of herself in the reflection.

Her eyes were twinged with strange shade of yellow.

=== End of Part 1 ===

Chapter End Notes

that's it for part 1!!! thank you guys so much for reading and for your comments and kudos! I can't wait for you get your hands on part 2!!!!
Chapter 26

Chapter by jensenackals, princessleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

Kylo Ren - Strongest force-user and the Knights of Ren's chosen leader, weapon of choice is an ancient design crossguard lightsaber

Keri Ren - Oldest of the 7, was an apprentice of Snoke's before becoming a founding member of the Knights of Ren, weapon of choice is an electro-plasma spear

Kutch Ren - A brute of a warrior, has mastered 18 different types of combat, his favorite way to dispatch an opponent is decapitation, weapon of choice is a massive cleaver sword

Kada & Kabira Ren - Twin sisters who have an uncanny telepathic connection, Left the Jedi Temple with Kylo after Skywalker's betrayal, both exceptional marksman, weapons of choice are B-311 plasma rifles

Kinir Ren - The youngest, a Clawdite changeling who was found by Keri abandoned in Coruscant and raised by the Knights of Ren, still learning to control his force abilities, weapons of choice are twin electro-plasma daggers

Kost Ren - Also a founding member, an outstanding pilot who took a vow of silence after his mother, and only family, was murdered for using the Force on their home planet of Askaji, chosen weapon is an electro-plasma scythe

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

THE BATTLE OF MANDALORE

= = = SIX YEARS AGO = = =

A quiet shudder went through the ship as they entered the atmosphere, the seven Knights swaying back and forth in the turbulence. The Mandalorians had never been peaceful subjects, but their occasional pillage or blockade had only been a nuisance before now. Swiftly and efficiently dealt with by the Stormtroopers. This was not uncommon as many systems in the outer rim were resisting First Order control, preferring their lawless ways of life over the structure and unification the First Order was advocating.

However, this was different. Supreme Leader Snoke had received intel that the Mandalorians had acquired a weapon of unimaginable magnitude. A mechanism so powerful, that it could manipulate gravity itself. Such a feat had never been heard of before and Snoke had spent hours with the prisoner, gaining as much information as possible about it's origins.

After much persuasion, the informant had also indicated that the Mandalorian leadership intended to
use this mechanism against the First Order.

Thus, the Knights of Ren had been entrusted with the infiltration of the Mandalorian stronghold, the apprehension of their military leadership and the destruction of the device.

As Kost guided the ship into the lower atmosphere, a bombardment of cannon fire sounded around them. Only Kinir reacted to it. Keri had begged Kylo not to bring him, but he wasn't a child anymore and it was time she accepted that. Kinir was now a full year older than Kylo had been when he'd first joined the Knights of Ren and a very accomplished warrior in his own right.

The Supreme Leader, and by extension Kylo, had no use for a soldier who didn't fight. It was beyond time for him to take his place as a true Knight of Ren.

"Gear up." Kylo commanded as they sped over the choppy waves of the Kelita River and the capital city of Keldabe came into view through the downpour.

The shuttle was immediately filled with the sounds of weapons being charged and the clatter of armor being fastened. Putting on his mask, Kylo reached out to feel his brothers and sisters in the Force. He could feel Kost's concentration. Keri's contempt. Kutch's bloodlust. Kada and Kabira's mirth. He could feel Kinir's apprehension as the boy sheathed his daggers in the back of the hold.

Kylo removed his safety belts and moved down the short space to crouch in front of where Kinir was sitting.

The boy was wearing a new face today, Kylo wondered vaguely who he'd fashioned it after. He had green-brown eyes and sandy brown hair with a straight nose and thin mouth. Overall, not a bad combination. The kid was getting good, if Kylo hadn't known any better he would have assumed Kinir was human.

"Don't fight a battle-" Kylo said expectantly, placing a gloved hand on the helmet in the boys lap.

Kinir took a deep breath in an attempt to steady himself before finishing. "... You don't plan to win."

"Good," Kylo reassured. "What's the plan?"

"Infiltrate the stronghold. Destroy the device."

Kylo gave him a firm nod and then pushed the helmet towards Kinir, who obeyed and donned his mask. The kid would be fine. He would stick close to Keri like they had talked about and watch her back while she placed the charges.

As Kylo moved back to the front of the ship, Keri shot him a proud smirk before placing her own helmet on her head.

Through the cockpit windows, Kylo could see Kost firing on the surface cannons around the perimeter of the hangar bay. When the last gun exploded in a shower of sparks, their ship descended gracefully down onto the landing pad while a squad of Mandalorian soldiers lined up with guns raised to meet them.

"They're making it too easy." Kabira whined, her usually musical voice distorted through the filtration system in her helmet.

Kada joined her sister at the window and chuckled wickedly. "Shall we have a exhibition then?"

"First one to the-"
"Middle wins."

Their clipped sentences and silent conversations used to annoy Kylo to no end. In the past, he'd tried to get the twins to designate one speaker, just for sake of avoiding the migraines they induced, but they both enjoyed talking too much for one of them to remain silent and the rest of them had been forced to grow used to their endless chatter.

Kylo hit the release mechanism, igniting his lightsaber while Kada and Kabira took their places behind him. The Mandalorian soldiers began firing as soon as he descended the ramp. Kylo deflected blast after blast with his lightsaber, taking the brunt of the heavy fire while the twins picked off the gunmen one by one.

The firefight was over almost as soon as it started, the few soldiers who Kada or Kabira hadn't taken out, running for cover as the seven Knights of Ren trudged forward through the downpour. The ground around them was littered with bodies, rain falling in sheets as the gusts of wind blew the droplets sideways. Kylo let Kutch do most of the cleaning up, only running his lightsaber through one of the retreating soldiers as the blast doors came into view.

A Mandalorian Captain, if his insignia was to be trusted, attempted to lockdown the facility from just inside the building. However, his efforts were futile. The blast doors only closed and inch or so before Kylo reached out through the Force and held them open easily. Kost and Kutch lead the way into the brightly lit hallway, leaving a dozen or so dispatched soldiers in their wake.

"Find them." Kylo ordered, his voice flat and four of the seven took a stairwell left while Keri, Kinir and himself continued forward toward the lift that would take them to sublevels.

Sweat ran into his eyes and his breath came in hard spurts as he watched the indicated lift levels drop steadily. That was strange. He must've expended more energy than he'd thought during their incursion... but the more he thought about it, the more he realized he hadn't done anything to warrant this sort of physical exertion.

He just didn't have enough fuel to feed the darkness and it had cost him.

A sharp pang of self-doubt released in his stomach, followed quickly by a wave of self-hatred and Kylo latched onto it, feeling the power explode in his chest and the flames pulse through his veins. He was fool for not taking precautions, for not preparing correctly for a battle. He'd left himself exposed by being preoccupied with Kinir, by comforting the boy.

He was weak for letting the conflict burrow so deep inside him he couldn't be rid of it.

A massive explosion sounded above them and the shaft of the lift shuddered in response. Kylo immediately felt four distinct signatures all cry out at once and then nothing.

Silence.

Dread filled him as he looked up to stare at the lift ceiling. They were gone. Kost, Kutch, Kada and Kabira gone in an instant. How was that possible?

"They're-" Kinir said shakily, his voice full of fear even through the distortion. "I felt it-"

The lift doors opened and Kylo snapped back to attention as three Mandalorians emptied blasters in their direction. He heard Keri let out a strangled cry behind him but kept his focus on the soldiers, deflecting their blasts with his lightsaber. His blood heated as he reached out and felt for the bones of the man nearest him, snapping his neck while sending the other two crashing back down the hall before grabbing their windpipes with his mind and choking them as efficiently as if they were
Once the coast was clear, he turned quickly to find Keri and Kinir huddled in the corner of the lift. With horror, Kylo reached out to check for injury but Keri was fine, it was when he felt for Kinir that his stomach dropped. The boy was dead, a blaster wound gaping in his chest plate.

He'd been distracted, the shock of over half their unit alive one moment and dead the next had taken his attention away from their surroundings. And Kinir had paid the price.

"We have to go-" Kylo said roughly, grabbing Keri by the arm and forcing her to stand.

She shoved at him weakly, "We can't leave him here!"

"Yes, we can." He spat, being unnecessarily brutal, but if they were the only ones left, he needed to make sure he didn't lose Keri too.

The panic and anguish that sparked from Keri was equal to his own as he half dragged her down the hallway. It clouded his mind and intensified his senses. He didn't allow himself to process what had just happened, just felt the rawness clawing at his insides and let his blood burn.

After a few short moments, Keri stopped fighting him and her pain turned to anger beneath his touch. Something in the back of his mind registered that she was angry with him, but Kylo didn't look at it too carefully. She could berate him when this was over.

They reached the end of the hall and the blast doors opened at his touch. Before them sat a massive apparatus, ten meters in diameter and fifteen meters tall. Wires, tubes and monitors encased the device, making it look like a mechanical hurricane. He watched as Keri approached the weapon, taking off her helmet and walking in a slow circle around the base of the weapon.

Seemingly satisfied with her assessment, she pulled three charges from her belt and placed them at strategic intervals around the main control panel.

"It'll blow in thirty seconds." She snapped, not looking at him. He felt the venom in her voice like a slap.

Kylo reached out to grab her hand as she passed, "Keri-"

"I don't want to hear it." Yanking her arm from his grasp she gave him one last scathing look before fitting her helmet on her head once more. This had been his plan and now five of the seven were dead. Keri was holding him responsible.

Kylo was about to follow her back out into the hallway when he noticed something out of the corner of his eye. Through the opening in his mask he could see a ribbon of sparks wrapping around several of the wires surrounding the control panel. He turned and watched their progression intently. The charges hadn't detonated yet and by his count they had another 20 seconds.

He felt a disturbance in the machine, how could he feel a machine, and then an awful pulverizing sound came from deep within the device. His first instinct was to ground himself in the Force, and he did so just in time.

The weapon imploded, metal and wiring and tubing all collapsing in on itself in a twisted mass. Kylo and Keri watched in horror as the charges finally ignited and were useless against the engulfing blackness that had erupted where the machine once stood. The implosion spread, sucking up floor tiles and chunks of support beams followed quickly by the pillar next to Kylo. He felt his boots begin to slide toward the cyclone now sucking everything within a 20 meter radius into the void. Reaching
behind him desperately, his hand found an exposed pipe in the wall that gave him a temporary salvation.

Keri stumbled and lost purchase on the increasingly uneven floor. Kylo reached his arm out as far as he could while still grasping at a pipe as she slide violently past him. Keri caught his fingertips in her tight grip and his shoulders screamed in protest at the added burden.

He had her but there was no place for them to go. The blast doors were ripped from their sockets and very nearly collided with Keri on their way into the void.

Kylo could feel his glove begin to slip down his wrist and there was nothing he could do to stop it. Frantically, he tried to adjust his grip on Keri's palm but the gravitational pull was growing ever stronger, eating up more and more of the room around them. He begged to whichever part of the Force that was listening. Light, Dark, he didn't care. Kylo just begged and begged for it to somehow give him the strength to save them.

His glove shifted between his fingers and was ripped from his grasp, Keri with it. The last thing he heard was her strangled cry before she was swallowed up.

Kylo never did figure out how he got out of there. He briefly remembered running sideways down the bright white hallways before walls, ceiling and floor succumbed to the black hole-

But how he got back to the ship, and up and out of the Mandalorian system, was a mystery.

The aftermath of the Battle of Mandalore was First Order myth. Some say it was the first clue as to the rise of the Resistance within the republic. Others say it was a mutiny, a way for Kylo Ren to take out all those who had the power to challenge his authority.

Kylo Ren hadn't had the words to describe the events. The guilt that plagued him unrelenting. Everytime he closed his eyes he saw Kinir's mangled body. Everytime there was silence, he heard Keri's distorted scream.

It had taken him months to figure out what happened to the other four. Finally choking it out of a Mandalorian who had been taken captive during a Resistance raid.

It turned out that a Governor of Keldabe had been tipped off to the Knights of Ren's objectives.

Knowing that he and the rest of the Mandalorian leadership would be taken straight to Snoke to be questioned and killed, he'd activated a self-destruct protocol and blown the top two floors of the building. Not only killing Kost, Kutch, Kada and Kabira, but all of the Mandalorian Political and Military leadership that had been on the base at the time.

Though his motives had been noble, the Governor had only bought the Resistance a few weeks before the First Order had been alerted to their rising presence in the outer rim. Therefore ensuring, that if it was the last thing he ever did, Kylo Ren would tear the universe apart to stomp out every worthless being that ever called themselves a Resistance fighter.
i took some serious liberties in this chapters so thanks for stick with me!

i would also like to take a minute and give a huge shout out to my girl Rem (@soviet-lovers on tumblr) who is my sounding board for this fic and gives me so much inspiration and support when it comes to mapping out these stories. she literally keeps me sane. i cannot thank her enough.

as always, let me know your thoughts in the comments.. LOVE YALL
Chapter 27

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

seriously, thank you guys so much for your comments and kudos. you are way too good to me. ilysm you have no idea!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

=== PART 2 ===

Ben burst into the hangar bay just in time to see a Corellian Starfighter speeding off toward the horizon.

He kicked a crate with all his might, letting out a string of expletives in several different languages. Pacing back and forth, Ben grabbed his hair roughly, the sharp pain in his scalp making it a little easier to focus. He could actually feel Rey getting further and further away, a hole in his chest growing to replace the one she had just healed.

Knocking a droid out of his way, he sprinted back through the building, taking the stairs three at a time. The chain of events flashing through his mind with each level he climbed. It was his fault. He'd thought he could incapacitate Keri, so he hadn't gone for the killing blow and it had nearly cost him his life.

Whether or not he had actually died, he didn't know. Ben had known his fair share of pain, but never anything like the blinding agony of the spear in his chest. He'd known fear before, but a new form of hysteria had taken hold as the suffocating gag had filled his lungs with blood.

It was his fault Rey had run away and his mind filtered through all ways he could have reacted differently. He never should have accused her, never should have let go of her hand. He should have stood between Rey and her friends, knowing as he did how easy it was to lash out when the blaze was in control. He should have reached out to her, he should have soothed the inferno engulfing her from the inside out.

But Ben had seen her eyes...

And he'd panicked.

He rounded the corner into the Resistance's makeshift control room and accosted the first communications officer he saw.

"Track that ship-" He yelled frantically, pointing out the window as Rey's stolen starfighter curled up and out of the atmosphere. The woman leaned away from him, holding her crate up a little higher as if it could be a shield between them. Ben furrowed his brow in confusion and looked around to see storage containers littering the room. The Resistance officers sending out evacuation signals in all
directions and packing up their equipment.

Locating Dameron across the room, he made his way roughly through the maze of people and desks. "You're abandoning the city!" Ben shouted, louder than he'd intended, but honestly he didn't care. Several people stopped what they were doing, hands moving to their blasters as he took another step closer to their leader.

"What did you expect?" Dameron spat, handing off a data pad. He was infuriatingly calm for someone so short. "The attack is still on its way and we don't have anything to bargain with."

"That's not true-" A gruff looking Dressellian grunted through it's over large mouth and gestured to Ben. "We have him."

The room went quiet for several tense moments, everyone staring at Ben while he stared at Dameron. He tensed on basic instinct, reaching out to feel the bodies around him in preparation for a fight. If they wanted to try and hand him over to the First Order, that was fine. He would take down as many of them as he could on the way.

"No-" The Stormtrooper, who now called himself Finn, spoke up from behind Dameron. "He might be the only one who can find Rey."

Ben let out a frustrated breath and put as much contempt in his voice as he could muster. "So, you're abandoning her too."

"Watch it-" Dameron rounded on him in a wave of fury. "She is the only reason you don't have a blaster between your eyes right now."

"We tried to track her," Finn interrupted solemnly. "But the ship was cloaked."

"That starfighter wouldn't even show up on First Order scanners." Dameron added, closing up a crate with a snap. "There's no finding her.. not until she wants to be found."

The Stormtrooper looked like he might want to argue, but held his tongue.

Dameron picked up a crate and shoved past Ben roughly. "Everyone back at it-" He called to the stunned officers around the room. "Let's get outta here."

Seeing as there was no one to stop him, Ben gave Finn one last scathing look before turning gruffly and heading back into the hallway. Oblivious to the woman who now followed him. He would find Rey. He didn't know how... or where he would even start but-

"Are you really her son?"

Ben stopped dead, his hand on the door release to the stairwell.

"General Organa," the tentative voice continued and he looked over his shoulder to see a young woman with dusty blonde hair standing in the middle of the hall. She swallowed hesitantly, "You are her son, aren't you?"

A small flare of recognition sprung to life in the back of his mind. She had been in the hall when they'd first arrived. Rey had called her Connix.

"There were rumors-"

Of course there were, but Ben had no desire to hear them. He shoved open the door and descended
the stairs once more. He heard the young woman call after him but he didn't look back. Wasting time swapping Resistance gossip wasn't high on his priority list. He needed a plan. He needed a ship. He needed-

A new shirt. The front of his jacket was in tatters, a gaping hole over his rib cage. Ben let out a soft curse. There was dried blood around the rough edges of the fabric and his undershirt felt brittle. Rey's request would come to fruition after all. He needed different clothes.

There were only a few people in the hangar bay when he marched through the blast doors for the third time in as many hours. His eyes scanned the deck, taking inventory. A dozen or so x-wings, a handful of transport shuttles, a rotund cargo ship and his father's freighter.

Ben supposed, if he wasn't in the business of making enemies, that he should probably take the Falcon. Wasn't it technically Rey's now? Was it his? Could murderers inherit? He thought darkly.

The blast doors opened behind him and he turned to see Chewie and the Stormtrooper, both with rucksacks over their shoulders.

"We're coming with you." The Stormtrooper said confidently. Ben shot them a withering stare, not sure he heard correctly.

No use in arguing. Growled Chewie and they strode right past him to board the Falcon.

Chapter End Notes

can murderers inherit? the answer is no. at least according to US law.

here is a dark!rey playlist that you didn't ask for..
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/73IhocK3Cddy3CzzlqBEJo

tripolar - ms mr
let me go - haim
dark nights - dorothy
control - halsey
bad dream - ruelle
don't blame me - taylor swift
biting down - lorde
blinding - florence + the machine
black - kari kimmel
until we go down - ruelle
gasoline - halsey
i did something bad - taylor swift
missile - dorothy
wrong victory - ms mr
up in flames - ruelle
glory and gore - lorde
night so long - haim
so it goes - taylor swift
Falling in and out of consciousness on her trip through hyperspace had left Rey's eyesight blurry and her head pounding. The visions had come in fits and spurts, feeling like fire as they burned the back of her eyes. Most of the illusions had been memories, but not all of them her own. She'd seen flashes of Ben, as a laughing child atop his father's shoulders during a festival. As a teenager sitting around with a group of kids his age, a lightsaber spinning innocently in the middle of their circle.

She'd seen him standing at the base of a black tower, the glow of molten lava reflected in his dark eyes.

She'd also seen moments that appeared frozen in time. A man with dark braids and a golden stripe across his cheeks carrying a pale lifeless body through a forest. A woman with a golden saberstaff fighting an adversary in a metal mask. A man in dark robes and a woman in white lace embracing on a garden balcony.

More vividly, she'd seen scenes from her own childhood. Fighting with bullies on Jakku, conversations with off worlders who would stop through Niima Outpost, restoring the collapsed AT-AT to make it her new home. Scavenging the starship graveyard with Mashra and begging the older woman to tell her the story again.

"You a desert rat," She had said fondly, messing Rey's hair. "Why you dream of magick swamp people?"

Mashra had told Rey a great many stories growing up, but her favorite had always been the legend of the Nightsisters. Powerful witches that made their home on the planet Dathomir, the Nightsisters were a ghost story. A race of warrior women who kept their husbands as slaves and hunted rancors with nothing but their bare hands.

Maybe because the witches were the slavers as opposed to the enslaved, or because they seemed to have so much power when Rey herself had so very little, it didn't matter either way. She had absolutely worshiped them.

It was in this inebriated state, that Rey had switched course mid-flight and charted out a path to the red planet now glowing in front of her. So many legends of her childhood had turned out to be true, why not this one?

The scanner was showing minimal lifeforms and no civilizations. The computer continued through
it's examination, showing it to be habitable with adequate oxygen to nitrogen ratios and a temperate climate.

However, as Rey guided the ship into the lower atmosphere, it was soon evident that the planet had been abandoned. There wasn't a sign of sentient life for miles. Descending smoothly over the trees, she took in the forest. It didn't look like Takodana, not upon closer inspection. The trees were as tall but the colors were a deeper, richer tone and the vegetation was more... Rey struggled to find the word... tropical.

She'd known from Mashra's stories that the Nightsisters made their home in a swamp, but as she absorbed the habitat, a new description came to mind. This was a jungle.

Her excitement waned though, as she flew for almost an hour over the sprawling landscape. Coming here had been a mistake. What had she hoped to find? A tribe of benevolent witches who would take her in and calm the constant scorching in her heart? The regret that bloomed deep in her chest spread quickly, eating up all rational thought.

It was just that she'd felt so out of control, her first instinct had been to run. Rey hadn't wanted to hurt anyone else and she knew the fire that burned inside her was incapable of being tamed. But in her rush for isolation, she had hurt herself in the process. She missed Finn, she missed Chewie, she missed the Falcon.

She missed Ben.

The regret quickly changed to an oppressive ache that washed over her, pushing her to the brink of tears. Rey knew there was a reason for these volatile emotions but she couldn't push past the longing that was overwhelming her.

A village of ruins caught her eye and she turned sharply to not miss it. With something new to focus on, the emotions disappeared just as quickly as they came.

Rey put the ship down just outside an overgrown courtyard. She had barely cut off the engines before she was clamoring out of the ship, eager to see the environment up close. Vegetation curled up and around the ancient buildings surrounding her and glowing insects buzzed between the flowering vines. She continued her exploration, her one track mind failing to look back and see vines growing up and over the landing gear of her ship.

This place was beautiful.

Open air verandas spanned out beneath a towering stone fortress, flowering vines covering almost every inch of stone. More ruins lined the unused roads that stretched out from either side of the castle, overrun with dense ivy and lush grasses.

With every step Rey took, she felt a deep instinctual pull toward the planet and could feel herself opening up to the Force surging around her. It flowed through her seamlessly, as if it was pulling her into an embrace. Everything about this place offered her belonging, offered her acceptance, offered her power. She breathed in the rich floral smell that floated on the warm breeze and sighed.

How wondrous had this place been? Before the tragedy?

She stopped dead, temporarily stunned by her revelation. How could she have possibly known there had been a tragedy here?

Looking around once more, Rey tried to view the courtyard objectively. The stone was cracked and crumbling beneath the weight of the vegetation growing into the foundations. Underneath the
overgrown shrubbery and grass, she could see decaying bodies, bones washed white from the elements. It was still beautiful, a wild sort of beautiful, a terrible sort of beautiful.

How long had this place gone untouched? The glow of power diminished slightly and Rey saw the ruins for what they were.

Ruins.

Overtaken by a deep rooted sadness, she looked out over the desolate landscape. There were no legends to meet here, no one to help as the fire sparked and spit inside her. This place was empty. The power was still there, just beneath the surface of the planet but there was no one to wield it.

She felt the call again, and whatever had taken hold inside of her responded fervently. Only now instead of offering her acceptance, it writhed and twisted with intolerable heat. The thing, the darkness, was gaining ground. Growing out from her chest to consume her.

Rey was burning from the inside out.

Bracing herself against the ancient stone wall, she tried to steady her erratic breathing. She was alone. On fire and utterly alone. The flames were unbearable, the loneliness crippling, the pain of living excruciating.

Unable to hold the tears back any longer, Rey fell to her knees. The wild vines scalded her skin where they touched her hands and arms. The stones were unstable beneath her and her limbs became heavy as she tried to move.

She had saved Ben's life, but forfeited her own in the process. This was all the anger and pain that had taken control in those few moments where he hovered between life and death. This was the hatred for the cruelty and brutality that now plagued the galaxy under the First Order's control. This was the misery and suffering of her childhood when she'd gone to sleep hungry, when her days spoils had been stolen, when she had been beaten to within an inch of her life.

This was the dark side.

The blaze was devouring her and she couldn't stop it. Unable to bear it anymore, Rey crawled into a small alcove nestled between two pillars, and pulling her knees up to her chest, she finally gave in and wept.

Chapter End Notes

there were some obscure references in the chapter. i promise they will be explained...... eventually.

http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/Nightsisters if you are interested ;)

if you like the story drop me a comment and don't forget to subscribe!! i try to update as often as i can.. usually every two or three days. thanks again for the kudos you guys are so awesome
The strain in Ben's neck and shoulders was excruciating but he was so close. He pressed harder, feeling fingernails dig into his palms as the Force compressed around him. Breathing through the constriction in his chest, he pushed at the surrounding energy and almost passed out from the effort of trying to open the connection through his own willpower.

The air tensed and Ben held on desperately, reaching into the abyss for anything that remotely felt like Rey.

He had been at this for nearly three hours, hiding in an interior storage room of the Falcon in an attempt to avoid the Stormtrooper and the Wookie. Their brief argument in the hangar bay on Corellia had stretched his patience to the very end. The temptation to overpower them, to crawl into their minds and make them turn away, make them forget they had ever seen him, had been very real. Ben had no doubt he could have persuaded the Stormtrooper without incident. Chewie would have been the challenge, physically and mentally, and the Wookie had made it very clear he wasn't going anywhere without the Stormtrooper.

It was infuriating.

So, he'd isolated himself under the guise of searching out new clothes. Which he found easily, opening a hidden hatch that revealed a few items that were at least 20 years old, but relatively untouched of age. Ben had found little to choose from in his size, doing his best to ignore the smaller female and child sized clothes stored there. Thankfully his pants and boots were still serviceable, so he'd picked the least obscene of the open collared black shirts and paired it with a black utility vest.

Guilt, resentment and pain twisted up inside his stomach as he clipped his lightsaber to his belt once more. Ben knew who he looked like, even without having to glance in the small mirror hanging inside the open hatch.

He hated it.

Replacing his tattered shirt and jacket had taken a grand total of twelve minutes, which was how he'd ended up here. Attempting to meditate his way into forcing the bond open.

He'd started his contemplation by just thinking about Rey, about the last three days spent in her company, and several revelations had come to him.

One, that saving his life or stopping him from dying or bringing him back from the dead (he hadn't decided what had actually happened yet) made Rey one of the strongest Force-users in the history of
the universe. Her manipulations going against the cyclical nature of the Force; which is that all things are born, they live, and they die. That doesn't change, it can't be stopped, and Rey had altered the very fabric of their reality. He was the living, breathing proof.

Two, that Ben could still feel her in the back of his mind, it was small and distant and heartbreakingly muted but she was still there. Which was new. Their bond had always been dependent on proximity, or as a result of one of their 'connections'. So the fact that he could still feel the dim pulse of her lifeforce, gave him hope in the most intrinsic way possible. If he could feel her, he could communicate with her. If he could communicate with her, he could find her.

And finally, Ben realized that he had spent so many weeks and months trying to make Rey his own, to possess her, to have her by his side; that he had never stopped to consider that he had willingly become hers. But he had. He belonged to her, wholly and irrevocably. Nothing was more certain to him than that fact and it filled him with a strange sort of peace.

He followed the thought a little deeper and stumbled upon another shocking certainty. The sense of self wasn't something that could be stolen away. He could never have forced Rey to stay with him, no matter his methods or how much she cared for him. Devotion had to be freely given and Rey would never have submitted to Kylo Ren.

But Ben-

Ben had given all of himself to her the moment she'd disappeared from his bed, begging the Force for one more moment with him. And it had been the easiest decision of his life, diving into the Force head first in search of her bright white signature. Not to own it, but just to bask in it's easy rhythm. It had been as easy as breathing. It had felt like salvation.

It was in this state of mind that he had begun his machinations. His wide reaching search through the galaxy that left his fingertips numb and sweat beading his forehead. After hours of laboring, he could feel the compression about to snap. Could feel her on the edges of his awareness. Could feel the force giving way under his unyielding touch. Could feel his all consuming need for her driving his willpower, and then-

It happened.

A violent tremor traveled outward and Ben gasped savagely, relishing the feeling of full lungs once more. He clutched the wall to support his wearied legs, blood rushing back to his extremities. His head spinning with the flood of oxygen that overwhelmed his brain.

She was there. Rey was there. He could feel her but...

Something was wrong, he could feel the echo of her anguish and he took several quick breaths trying to get his bearings. His eyes darted back and forth, searching the storage room where he was hiding but he didn't see her.

"Rey?" He called desperately, turning in a full frantic circle. After a moment of agonizing silence, he finally heard a soft sob coming from behind a storage crate. He darted toward the sound, shoving the container aside to find her huddled in a ball, sobbing into her knees.

The bright white lightning that usually accompanied her was gone. In its wake was a roaring fire, spitting sparks and churning flames spreading to consume her. This was not the Rey he had grown so accustomed too. This Rey was raw, the power that burned within her untamed. Ben crouched down, his hands hovering an inch above her arms, not sure if his touch would do more harm than good.
She finally lifted her gaze to meet his, her eyes were red-rimmed and streaming with tears, but remarkably her perfect shade of hazel. His knees went weak in relief.

"Are you okay?" He asked intently, visually checking her for any sign of injury.

She let out a ragged breath. "It hurts."

His heart sunk at her words, he knew exactly what she meant. The dark offered power and knowledge to be sure, but at a cost. That much energy flowing through her had to be unbearable.

Sitting down in front of her, he reached out a tentative hand, wanting to comfort but not totally sure how. The last several years, Ben had strongly disliked any sense of touch. Thankfully, his reputation and short temper had squashed any real threat, his many layers of clothing and his thick leather gloves an extra insurance. But when Rey touched him, Force save him, when she touched him it was like his entire body was singing with the sensation. Radiating with the pleasure of her skin on his skin.

Making up his mind, Ben grazed a palm up her arm and then to her shoulder, gently pulling her into his chest. She came willingly, folding herself into his embrace and burying her face in his collar. Her body shuddered with sobs and Ben felt the intense need to destroy the thing that was causing her so much pain. Coming to his senses however, he realized that as much as he'd like too, he couldn't take the darkness from her, couldn't control it for her. At least not from here, lightyears away, hiding in the belly of his dead father's ship.

So, Ben didn't move, didn't say anything. Just held her while she cried.

Instead, he tried to expand his emotions outward while tracing gentle circles in her back. Let her know that he understood, that he believed in her, that she was the strongest person he'd ever known.

Her agony was crushing, so intense that her skin actually burned where it met his. He had always pictured Rey as a lightning storm, so bright it was almost blinding. But this blaze was blinding in a different way. A raging inferno that was as wide as it was tall, consuming everything in its path.

Is this what the darkness did to everyone? Is this what she had felt while in close proximity to him?

She sniffed, then straightened, wiping her cheeks roughly. They were so close together, their noses brushed softly as she scrubbed her eyes.

"Rey," Ben's voice sounded tortured, even to his own ears, but he didn't know how much time they had left. "Tell me where you are."

She leaned her forehead against his cheek, nuzzling her nose underneath his jaw. "I couldn't-" She hiccupsed. "I couldn't let you die."

Her skin was so hot, he could feel the smoldering embers underneath. He brushed at the edges of her mind but found it impenetrable. If she would only let him in for a moment-

"Rey," He choked, tightening his arms around her in a panic as he felt the Force begin to move once more. "Please."

He could feel it converge between them and his muscles tensed, refusing to let her go.

"Dathomir," She breathed, her voice echoing faintly and Ben's heart stopped. Dathomir, she was on Dathomir!? He barely had time to process the information before she vanished, leaving him frozen on the floor in a shocked silence.
The loss of her presence in his arms was briefly debilitating, followed by a rush of purpose as a plan began to form in his mind.

He had a location. He had a trajectory. He was coming for her.

Chapter End Notes

honestly can i just say how much i love all of you who take time to leave comments and kudos? i know i would not have made it this far without your encouragement. your enthusiasm literally inspires me to write so thank you from the bottom of my heart.

as always, drop me a comment, i love hearing all your theories!!! and don't forget to subscribe for update notifications <33
Chapter 30

Chapter by jensenackals, prinecssleia (jensenackals)

Chapter Summary

just a short lil chapter that i have been dying to write since the very beginning..

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ben vanished just as quickly as he came, the fire in Rey's chest roaring back to life in his absence. The burning had lessened to a dull ache as he'd held her and she could still feel the ghost of his steady hand running up and down her spine.

Somehow, concentrating on his lingering touch grounded her and Rey kept her eyes closed for one more moment, taking a deep breath to calm her pounding heart.

That's when she felt it, just outside the courtyard walls.

Rey wasn't alone.

Standing quietly, she latched onto the presence that was just on the edge of her awareness. Rey had been so preoccupied with her own turmoil that her defenses had dropped, retreating within herself so deep that she had no clue of her surroundings.

Whatever it was, whoever it was, they were withdrawing quickly.

Fear gripped her, followed by an angry curiosity and Rey struggled with which to act on. Her first instinct was to get back to the ship. She could decide whether to hide or arm herself from there.

Stepping out of the alcove, she darted through the overgrown garden in the general direction of the stolen starship. The Dathomirian sky had turned a violent shade of crimson, as opposed to the faint pink she had observed upon landing. The sun's position indicated it was late into the afternoon, possibly close to dark, and Rey broke into a sprint.

As she ran, branches snagged her clothes and leaves smacked her face, leaving shallow cuts in their wake. She tripped once, over an uneven stone in the path, but rolled easily and kept up her pace. A shadow lurked on the edge of her vision. Out of the corner of her eye, she could see a dark figure through the trees. But when she turned her attention to it, she was met with nothing but vegetation.

It was not comforting.

However, her panic heightened when she skid to a stop on the outskirts of the clearing. Where her ship should have been, Rey was met with a great green mass of foliage, dense ivy covering almost every square inch of metal. She only knew it was the starfighter by the shiny bits of window reflecting the red tinted light through the leaves.

Impossible. How had this grown in the time she had spent in the abandoned city?
Rey's luck was doomed to turn from bad to worse, though. She felt it again. Felt them, only much closer this time.

She whirled around, ready to face the lurker.

Rey barely had to time to register a sharp, pale face with piercing blue eyes before a cold hand was pressed to her forehead.

"Why have you come?" The hoarse whisper reverberated through the swamp before everything went black.

Chapter End Notes

almost 200 kudos!?!?!? can you guys stop being so nice to me.. seriously i'm about to cry
Ben burst into the cockpit, but instead of finding two figures sitting in front of the controls, there was one.

"Where's Chewie?"

The Stormtrooper looked Ben up and down before answering. "No idea. He growled something, then left."

Ben sat down in the captain's chair and immediately began going through the process to drop them out of hyperspace. They needed to re-route as fast as possible.

"Hey-" Finn demanded. "What are you doing?"

The transition was sloppy, the Falcon lurching as the ship slowed and Ben began the calculations to their new destination. "I know where she is."

"How!?"

Ben didn't answer right away, keeping his eye on the hyperdrive gauge. When the Stormtrooper had suggested to the Resistance that Ben might be the only one who could find Rey. His assumption had been that Finn knew about their connection. Now he wasn't so sure. And if Rey hadn't told her so-called friends about the bond then he sure as hell wasn't going to.

"How?" Finn asked again, his eyes taking on a hard edge.

Ben let out an impatient sigh. "I just do."

"That's not good enough."

Not sparing him a glance, Ben flipped the switches and waited for the gauge to show eighty percent. It was going to be close, they barely had enough power for one jump.

"Listen," Finn continued, growing angry. "You can't just come in here and-"

But whatever Finn was going to say, he'd never know. The hyperdrive was powered up and Ben punched the ship into gear... Only to be met with a low groan from the engines and the Falcon slowing to measly pace as they drifted past an asteroid field.

Ben swore loudly and charged out of the cockpit toward the engine room, Finn hot on his heels.
"I still want an explanation!" Finn shot after him, Ben ignored it. This was a waste of time. What the hell could Chewie have been working on that would cause the whole hyperdrive system to malfunction.

"Look," Finn said from behind him. "I get that you are in love with her and everything-"

Ben threw him a murderous glance over his shoulder.

"Don't deny it," Finn cut him off. "We were all there when you died."

Were they? Ben honestly didn't remember much outside the white hot pain in his side and the horrible sensation of not being able to breath. He remembered her, though.

Rey.

The bloody mess that was the front of her clothes. The stream of tears pouring down her face. Her soft sobs as she tried to staunch the bleeding. The warmth of her hands in his own as the life literally drained out of him.

That had been the first, and only time he had told Rey that he loved her. At least in so many words. Ben was sure she caught the gist of his feelings through their intimate moments, if not through their bond. It wasn't like he could suppress it. But he remembered thinking that if this was the end, if he really was dying, then Rey should have no doubts about how much he cared for her. So his last breath had went selfishly, and if he had to do it again, Ben wouldn't change a thing.

However, to know that his enemies, well maybe not enemies but people he detested, knew something so deeply personal about him was beyond irritating.

They rounded the last corner into the engine room and Ben almost ran headfirst into Chewie.

"What'd you do?!" The wookie growled at him.

Ben ground his teeth. "What did I do?" He gestured to the exposed wires hanging out of a ceiling hatch. "What did you do!"

Chewie roared in indignation. "Climate Control. It's fucking hot in here."

"Wait-" Finn interjected. "You speak that too?"

"Well, get it back up!" Ben shouted, grabbing at the tool box and finding a pair of pliers. "We've had a change in plans."

Finn threw his hands up exasperatedly, "Am I the only one who can't understand him?"

"You found her!?"

"She's on Dathomir." Ben muttered and Chewie cursed.

"You still haven't told me how you know that, by the way." snapped Finn as he dug through another tool box. Ben made a show of busying himself with coolant tube and ignored the question.

Chewie shot Ben an examining stare but otherwise didn't comment.

"Fine." Finn spat, when he realized Ben wasn't going to answer him. "Fine. Keep your secrets, but you owe me."
"I don't owe you anything."

Finn pointed the wrench he was holding at Ben's chest. "You tried to kill me."

"I tried to kill a lot of people." Ben deadpanned, not looking away from the wires he was reconnecting. "I just didn't succeed in your case."

The Stormtrooper looked momentarily appalled but recovered quickly, content to hand Chewie a spare part when called upon.

It only took a few minutes to get the air circulation reconnected and the hyperdrive systems back online. Before long, they had all the spare parts packed up, tools stowed away and the hyperdrive recharging.

As they made their way back to the cockpit, though, Chewie held Ben back and let Finn go on ahead. The Stormtrooper only glancing back in curiosity once before leaving them alone in the corridor.

"He deserves to know."

"Know what?" Ben asked defensively, momentarily playing dumb.

Chewie leveled him with a hard stare. "How you knew where to find Rey. He deserves to know."

"How do you even know?"

"She told me. On our way to Bordal."

Ben scoffed. "Well then she can tell him. He's her friend."

The wookie's gaze didn't waver and Ben suddenly felt much younger. How many times had Chewbacca looked at him like that? A brief memory flashed through Ben's train of thought. He was eight and Chewie had caught him using the landing gear for target practice with his father's blaster. The wookie hadn't told on him, but had made Ben repair all of the mechanisms without help.

The way Chewie was looking at him now, made him feel about eight years old again.

In a way, Chewbacca was the only family Ben had left. The thought released a flood of shame in his stomach and Ben looked away. The regret pounding in his head overwhelming.

"You changed clothes," Chewie observed quietly and another wave of shame hit Ben in the gut. "You look like him."

Ben clenched his jaw but didn't look up from his boots. "I know."

It was silent for several tense moments and Ben battled with his inner turmoil, knowing what he needed to say but not sure if he had the strength to say it.

"Chewie, I-"

"I don't want to hear it." Chewie grumbled before shoving past Ben into the cockpit.

The rush of remorse was quickly followed by anger and Ben had to concentrate all his energy on breathing through the red tint that was taking over his vision.

You can't erase the past, Son. None of us can.
His mother's words echoed faintly in his head and helped calm the fire in his nerve endings. Chewie had every right to not want to hear his concession of guilt. Had every right to be angry with the person who had murdered his best friend.

Ben took another deep breath.

In time, Ben knew he'd have to deal with the fallout. Knew when he'd decided to stay with Rey, that meant dealing with the consequences of his actions. Knew he would have to stop running and face the past eventually.

Not today, though.

He'd deal with ramifications after he got Rey back.

And not a second before.

He didn't know how long he stayed out in the hall trying to get a handle on his emotions, but when he finally felt in control enough to rejoin Finn and Chewie, they were finishing up a call to the Resistance base.

Ben sat down in front of the controls and tried not to grind his teeth at how quickly the comm had been cut after he'd walked in. Running a quick diagnostic, everything still seemed to be in working order. Or at least not any worse off than when they'd left Corellia. The repulsor was still damaged but Rey's handiwork on Takodana had repaired almost everything else.

Also checking their charted course and estimated time of arrival, Ben was surprised to find they would be approaching Dathomir within the hour. They were closer than he'd expected, not realizing how much space they had covered on their way through the Western Reaches.

"At least we don't have to go back to Jakku," Finn grumbled, eyeing the monitor from where he was sitting behind Chewie. Ben silently agreed, but for different reasons.

They'd had little to go on when Rey had taken off on Coronet. Jakku being the only planet that Rey had any connection too, that they knew of. It also seemed likely that she might want to return there at some point given the new information regarding her parents' resting place. Though, Ben had neglected to share that particular piece of information.

So, with no other leads, they had decided to try Jakku first. See if by any slim chance, Rey would return to the planet that raised her.

Ben hadn't let on, but he'd been apprehensive to see Rey's former home. Obviously, he knew she had a been a scavenger and he loathed to think what her living conditions had been like. What her working conditions had been like. How vile the people had been that she'd been forced to interact with day after day.

It was fortunate for Niima Outpost that Rey hadn't returned. Otherwise, Ben didn't know if the town would still be standing by the time he was through with it.

"So what's the deal with this Dathomir place?" Finn asked curiously. "Why would Rey go there?"

Closing his eyes briefly, Ben prayed to whatever deity was listening for patience. He'd only spent a limited amount of time in the Stormtrooper's company, and in that time, he had yet to not be talking.

Chewie growled a low response.
"What'd he say?" Finn asked, looking to Ben.

Ben took a deep breath through his nose, knowing Chewie purposefully spoke so that he would have to translate. "He said it's abandoned."

"Why?"

Finn could not have chosen a more irritating question but Ben answered anyway. "Most likely, no one resettled after the Clone Wars. Most, if not all of its inhabitants were wiped out for defying the empire."

"Why wouldn't they resettle?"

"One of the native species is rancors, so that could have something to do with it-"

Chewie let out a bark of a laugh.

"What's a rancor?" Finn asked, not missing a beat.

"Gigantic reptile that eats anything that moves." Finn looked like he wanted to ask more questions about the beasts so Ben continued quickly. "But there were rumors that the planet was cursed."

Finn eyed him skeptically, "Cursed how?"

The ghost stories of Ben's childhood came back to him in a rush of memory and in spite of everything, he found himself dropping his voice in enjoyment. Taking on the role of narrator to the terrible tale.

"Dathomir is unusually attuned to the dark side of the force," Ben spoke slowly out the front window, watching the glow of space speed past. "And it's said, that its inhabitants were able to wield the force as enchantments. The witches of Dathomir could manipulate the force into spells so powerful, only another Nightsister could break them.

"The witches grew to an unstoppable force, so strong that the Emperor himself even feared them. So he sent his entire army, led by his apprentice Darth Tyranus, and killed every last man, woman and child on the planet. Leaving their corpses to rot in the swamps, so that the Emperor's power could never be questioned again."

Ben paused for dramatic effect and reflected in the glass he could see Finn's mouth open slightly in surprise.

"But the rumor is that one Nightsister survived.. She guards the spirits of her kin and cursed the planet so that all who step foot on its surface go mad and die a horrible death."

Finn's eyes were wide as Ben finished the story.

"Why the hell," The stormtrooper croaked. "Would Rey go there."

Ben's mouth twitched and he checked the monitor once more. Ten minutes to arrival.

"It sounds more like your type of place." Finn muttered pointedly and Ben's brief smirk turned into a scowl.

They sat in silence for the next several minutes. Ben doing his best to latch onto Rey's small presence in his head, thinking it could only help in locating her once they approached the planet. It may have been his imagination, but the connection felt stronger than before. Because of their brief conversation
or due to proximity, he didn't know.

Chewie dropped them out of light speed just as the monitor showed them entering the Dathomirran system. The crimson planet loomed in front of them, continents and oceans tinted the color of blood by the Red Giant that was the central star of this system.

A prickle started at the back of Ben's neck and spread slowly down his spine. The force moved around him in a gentle rhythm, the planet calling out to him, beckoning him closer to the surface. Ben blinked, then swallowed heavily. He wasn't sure if the other two could feel the change in the air around him but Ben's apprehension grew every second they moved closer to the surface.

It seemed the legends about the planet being consumed with the dark side were true.

"Great," Finn said sarcastically, peering through the windows at the red planet. "That doesn't look ominous at all. Red swamps full of things that want to eat us or kill us. It's a regular vacation spot-"

"Nothing is going to kill us." Ben spat as they began their descent into the atmosphere.

Finn rolled his eyes dramatically. "Because you'll kill it first."

Ben couldn't stop the corners of his mouth quirking in dark amusement.

However, as they broke through the cloud cover, Ben was hit by a wave of emotion. Passion, elation, anger, fear, sadness, guilt. They were all there. The source of them at the very core of the planet. He blinked rapidly, trying to keep his vision clear.

If he felt this just flying over the tops of the trees, how would it feel on the ground? What would it do to Chewie and Finn?

"You two should stay on the ship." Ben said quietly, knowing this was the right decision. Force-sensitive or not, this much power could easily drive a person insane.

The look of disbelief on both their faces was striking.

"That's the dumbest thing you've ever said." Chewie growled impatiently.

"You're nuts if you think we're going to stay behind." Finn added quickly.

Ben let out an irritated sigh, he should have known how they would react, but he was serious. The amount of energy that was flowing through the planet was staggering.

"Can't you feel it?" Ben implored, trying to keep a lid on his anger, it was tough the closer they came to the surface. "This much raw exposure to the Force could drive a person mad in minutes."

Finn crossed his arms incredulously but Chewie cocked his head, now listening intently.

"Plus if there is anything down there," Ben said, eyeing the jungle warily. "One person would less conspicuous."

Finn looked ready to argue but Ben rounded on him, cutting him off before he could speak.

"Think about Rey," Ben urged, keeping his voice even. "If she isn't in her right mind and she hurts one of you.. Think about what that would do to her."

He looked between them and could feel their apprehension at letting him go by himself. Not out of worry for Ben's well being but because they didn't trust him to bring Rey back. He tried not to let
their lack of faith sting. But it did.

If ever confronted with this later, Ben would firmly deny it. But in the moment he reached out through the force and gently nudged their decision making process. He wasn't changing their minds, not really, just pushing them in the right direction.

Ben wasn't proud of it, but if it kept them from harm it was okay. Right?

"Fine." Chewie agreed after a long moment. "But you're taking a communicator."

"Fine." Ben agreed as turned his attention back to the controls. He began scanning for lifeforms, though not actually paying attention to the readings as it scoped the northern hemisphere. Ben took over the controls and let the invisible string tying him to Rey guide the way.

They had been flying for less than half an hour when he felt it, felt her. Felt the spark in the back of his mind burst to life as they flew over a village in ruins. Ben could barely contain himself as he brought the ship down between the thick trees on the outskirts of the abandoned civilization. They were close. Rey was here.

Jumping out of the seat as soon as they touch the ground, Ben took off down the hall. He was so anxious he didn't even notice Finn behind him until a hand closed around his elbow and pulled him back.

"I still don't have a good feeling about this," the Stormtrooper said through a clenched jaw.

Ben took a deep breath, this wasn't up for discussion. "You're just going to have to trust me."

"That's the problem," Finn argued, taking a step closer and pointing a finger in Ben's face. "I don't trust you-"

"But you trust her," Ben finished for him, looking down his nose at Rey's supposed best friend.

"And she trusts you." Finn added scathingly, the disbelief and hatred in his voice unmistakable.

"What a difficult life you lead," Ben muttered, sidestepping the Stormtrooper and smacking the ramp release mechanism. "Stay on the ship."

Ben made his way down the ramp, the Force moving in fits and spurts around him as he disembarked. Everything about this place was calling to him. Begging him to give into the darkness. However, his pursuit of Rey was stronger than the temptation and he made it all the way to the edge of the clearing before looking back.

When he did though, he was shocked to see vines shooting up from the ground at an alarming rate. Circling their way around the landing gear and up the sides of the ship. Ben watched in horror as they crept up the ramp toward the inner hold.

Finn and Chewie were still standing at the top of the exit, watching him retreat, when they finally realized what was happening.

“Get out of here!” Ben shouted and Chewie took off toward the cockpit.

Finn stayed where he was, watching the vines grow closer to his feet. “What about you!” He called back.

“I’ll be fine!” Ben bellowed as the engines roared to life. “Just get out of here!”
The vegetation snapped and snagged as the ship tried to take off, the trees billowing in the wake of the exhaust. The Falcon finally broke free of the last of the ivy and hovered above the clearing.

"That's a short range communicator-" Finn's voice sounded through the device in Ben's hand. "If we go into orbit, you'll lose the connection."

Ben did some fast thinking. The only thing that mattered was finding Rey. "She has a ship. I'll be able to contact you from there."

He was met with silence for few short moments before static crackled on the other end. "I hope you know what you're doing."

Me too, Ben thought to himself as the ship turned up and out of the jungle and into the setting sun.

Chapter End Notes

ANOTHER HUGE SHOUTOUT TO REM (@soviet-lovers on tumblr) FOR INSPIRING THE BENFINN BUDDY COMEDY LOVE YOU REM

i really really hope finn didn't come across as annoying in this chapter. i absolutely adore him but it is from ben's pov so i hope it read okay.. thank you to everyone who has stuck with me this far. love you lots and lots!! let me know what you think and if you want to see more benfinn shenanigans <33
"Rey, come on-" A faint voice called through the fog. "WAKE UP."

The voice gave her something to latch onto as murky images continued to flash through her mind. She felt like she was drowning in them. But the voice, his voice, pulled her from the depths. She broke the surface of stolen memories and her eyes flew open as she gulped down blessed air.

The first thing she saw was blood red sky, quickly followed by dark eyes peering down at her, concern etched on every inch of his face.

"Ben-" She gasped, lungs heaving and heart pounding. He swore loudly, then pulled her in for a tight hug.

"YOU HAVE GOT TO STOP DOING THAT." He demanded quietly, mumbling into her hair.

Rey breathed in the smell of him, relaxing into his chest. "DOING WHAT?"

He didn't answer right away. And when he did, his voice was strained, barely containing his frustration. "LEAVING."

Remembering the aftermath of their encounter with Knights of Ren sent a pang of panic into her bloodstream and Rey suppressed a shudder.

"I WAS SO AFRAID."

The images were fading now, her senses heightened in the absence of their haze. In its wake, her head felt like it'd been put through a meat grinder. If Rey could go the rest of her life without another force vision, she would be perfectly happy.

Ben pulled back, gripping both sides of her face in his hands. He looked her up and down twice for good measure and when he seemed satisfied she had no injury, he pressed an urgent kiss to her lips.

"NEW RULE," He said against her mouth. "FROM NOW ON, WE GO EVERYWHERE TOGETHER."

"THAT SEEMS IMPractical," Rey rationalized between brushes of his mouth against hers.

"I DON'T CARE." He dove in a little deeper and Rey finally allowed herself to feel him. To feel his hands on her face, to feel the warmth of his body pressed against hers. She felt him in her mind as well, felt how much stronger, how much better they were together.

Ben slowed, transitioning from urgency to yearning, and Rey savored every graze of tongue and
teeth.

The creeping presence returned at the edge of Rey's awareness and she tore herself away from him, letting her gaze sweep over the deserted clearing. Ben must have felt it too because he stood and eyed the trees warily.

Taking her place at his side, Rey continued to reach out, trying to pinpoint the location of the woman who had been tormenting her.

"The Force has used lovers to find balance before," The hoarse whisper echoed around them, the voice reverberating on all sides. "It always ends in despair."

At the last word, Rey closed her eyes against the onslaught of images that flared to life in her head. Passion, battles, love and death permeated every set of partners. Then she saw her and Ben, watching their interactions play out as if a bystander. Starkiller Base, the Supremacy, their connections through the force. Tears sprung to her eyes as she once again saw Ben bleeding out in her arms.

No.

Pulling herself out of the trance, Rey forced her eyes open. She'd seen enough. Letting her gaze once again roam through the crimson twilight, her eyes finally landed on a figure materializing just inside the tree-line.

"Please, tell me you can see her." Rey pleaded through a whisper and Ben nodded.

The pale woman stepped out of the shadows, eyeing them both with contempt. "You will be no different."

Now that Rey had time to really look, she noticed that the woman wasn't just pale, she was almost transparent with a faint golden glow around her edges. Her cheeks and jaw were sharp, with an angular style of white-blonde hair piled on one side of her head. The most striking of her features however, were her piercing blue eyes. As they flicked back and forth between Rey and Ben, they filled with an intense sorrow.

"The stories were true-" Ben muttered, more to himself than anything. "One Nightsister survives."

"I am not alive," The woman said harshly. "I merely have become one with the Force."

Rey and Ben both took a half step closer to each other out of instinct. The ghost continued to stare; her gaze never wavering.

"Why does the vegetation fight back?" Ben called out, gesturing to the ivy-covered starfighter.

"Because I asked it too." The ghost rasped.

"Why?" Ben asked again, his voice taking on a hard edge.

The ghost took several silent steps toward them and Rey couldn't shake the feeling of familiarity as her features came into a sharper focus.

"No one has been to my home world in decades," Her voice was throaty and coarse. "And then two force-users, strong force-users, show up on the same day. I wished to know why."

If this ghost could control the plants, maybe they could as well. Rey tried to reach out to feel the life
surrounding her, but all she felt was fire.

"The dark side, it consumes you." She continued and Rey felt Ben stiffen beside her.

"Not anymore-" Ben growled, but the ghost shook her head.

"Not you," She nodded at Rey and took another step towards them. "Her."

The ghost was less than five feet away now and she was staring at Rey curiously, her head cocked to one side. Ben angled his body just enough, so he was directly between Rey and the ghost.

"You have nothing to fear from me, Ben Solo-" The ghost chided, continuing her silent steps forward. "Rey has come for my help, has she not?"

Her piercing blue gaze turned its attention back to Rey and dread clenched the space between her lungs. "I can't control it. I don't want to feel like this- I don't want the dark side."

"No, but it wants you."

Rey's mouth snapped shut in surprise. Ben kept his eyes on the ghost but reached a hand behind him. Rey laced her fingers through his, grounding herself in his touch.

"There is more to the force than just the Jedi and the Sith-" The ghost's gaze flicked down to their intertwined hands before returning to Rey's face. "The Nightsisters channel the dark side, yes. But we have one rule above all others-"

The jungle rippled around them, a tremor billowing out from the clearing as the insects buzzed in anticipation. The ghost leveled Rey with a heavy stare, blue eyes boring into hazel.

"Never concede to evil."

The soft commotion of the jungle died down in the wake of her words. Rey latched onto them, repeating them over and over in her head like a prayer.

The ghost looked between Ben and Rey, her hard gaze turning solemn once more. "It will end in despair. It always does."

Ben gave Rey's hand a gentle squeeze, whether seeking reassurance or giving it, she didn't know. The ghost let out the softest of resigned sighs then turned and walked silently back toward the trees.

"You-" Rey breathed, the memory of a lifeless body being carried through a red-tinted jungle slamming into place. "You fell in love with a Jedi?"

Ben turned to her sharply, his brow furrowed in surprise.

The ghost paused for several long moments before answering over her shoulder. "I did."

Rey waited for the ghost to continue, but it was a fool's hope.

"Do not say I didn't warn you," The ghost rasped and then she vanished, as if carried away in the breeze.

Chapter End Notes
i realize it has been A MINUTE since i last updated but i s2g this fic is still happening.. i just lost motivation there for two months or so.. but we are back and better than ever <33 if you are still here thanks for reading!

End Notes

inspired by WHEN THE HEART CAVES IN by Saints of Valory
find me @prinecssleia on tumblr. requests always open.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!