The Elusive Mating Dance of the Porgus Adorabilis

by andabatae

Summary

A Plaid Paramour prompt for NewerConstellations!

Rey Niima is a PhD student studying the extremely endangered porg. Her dissertation is almost complete, but there's one phenomenon she has yet to document: the porg mating dance. She's about to witness it for the first time when a plane crash-lands on the island, disrupting both the porgs and Rey's research.

Kylo Ren recently inherited Ahch-To, but what does a rich Manhattan playboy want with a deserted rock in the middle of the ocean? His plans to sell it as soon as possible are stymied when he crash-lands on the island and realizes it isn't deserted, after all...

Sparks fly as the snarky cynic and the idealistic nerd struggle to reconcile their differing worldviews. The porgs aren't the only ones navigating a complicated mating dance...
The Initial Approach

Chapter Notes

This was written for NewerConstellations based on a prompt she submitted to Plaid Paramour! I'm not going to share the full prompt yet to avoid spoiling the ending, but it starts like this:

"Rey is a research biologist who lives in the woods studying an endangered bird species. Ben Solo is a rich playboy whose private plane crashes nearby on a “solo” flight and she nurses him back to health as opposites collide."

This is fully drafted, and I'll be posting a new chapter every few days.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
To woo a prospective mate, the porg must first set the scene for his performance.

Rey Niima held perfectly still, holding her breath as a rustle in the bushes announced the arrival of her favorite bird in the world. Her camera was at the ready, the long lens protruding from the camouflage-patterned wildlife blind. If everything went well, she would finally get to document an incredibly rare sight: the mating dance of the *Porgus adorabilis*, more commonly known as the porg.
The porg was extremely endangered, its terrain limited to a small archipelago off the western coast of Ireland. Two of the islands were protected by the Irish government and were off-limits to visitors, even researchers like Rey, but the third island, Ahch-To, was private property. An American tycoon had bought it early in the 20th century, and while the Skywalker family hadn’t shown much interest in the island—it being just one among their many properties worldwide—the current proprietor was much more involved. Han Solo was a charming old rascallion who had married into the Skywalker family, and when he’d fallen out with his wife, he’d moved to Cork, Ireland, and taken over stewardship of the island.

Rey had first encountered Han Solo two years ago, when she’d just been starting her PhD at the University of Dublin. He’d been in town for business, although the nature of that business was suspiciously vague. Rey had never asked too much about it, having encountered plenty of illegal goings-on during her upbringing in foster care.

They’d met in a rough pub. Rey had been celebrating the start of term with her friends Finn and Rose, while Han had been nursing a pint after a day of meetings. When a red-faced local had attempted—rather aggressively—to hit on Rey, the alcohol had convinced her that it was a good idea to challenge him to an arm wrestling competition. If he won, she’d give him her number. If she won, he would fuck off immediately.

She had, of course, won.

From there, the night had quickly devolved into Rey standing on a table, shouting for any man with the stones to come face her. Six arm wrestling victories later, Rey had finally lost—to Han Solo, who had clapped her on the back and bought her a drink in congratulations for “kicking so much ass.” Three beers later, they were best of friends.

They met for drinks whenever Han came to Dublin for work, but it hadn’t been until four months later that she’d learned he owned Ahch-To. She’d spewed beer all over the table at the revelation. “That’s where my porgs are!” she’d screeched, much to his amusement and consternation.

The island was uninhabited, but Han readily agreed to let Rey camp out whenever she wanted to do research on the charming avians. Now, two years later, she was partway through her dissertation and was already considered the preeminent porg expert in the world—although that was probably an issue of scarcity rather than quality of research. It turned out few ornithologists wanted to camp in the rain for months on end to study the rumpled brown birds. Rey, though, had been infatuated the moment she’d turned a page in her textbook to see something that resembled the love child of a penguin and Puss in Boots.

The porg was an odd, isolated creature, much like Rey herself. Knowing all too well what it was to be overlooked, she had vowed to do everything she could to document and protect the species.

Another rustle. Rey’s palms were sweaty as she held the camera upright, praying her days of waiting would finally pay off. It was prime mating season, but the little birds had been surprisingly shy about their carnal activities.

A porg hopped out from the bush. The orange feathers surrounding its face indicated that this was a male. He cocked his head, studying the ground for a moment, then grabbed a twig in his beak and dragged it away. He did this again and again, clearing a circular patch of earth.

Rey took hundreds of photos, exulting in the rush that came with seeing something no one else ever had. She wasn’t just capturing still images—she’d placed microphones around the blind, as well, and a video camera lashed to the exterior was recording the scene.
The porg tidied his environment, creating a stage for his mating display. A drab female approached from the right, cocking her head in interest. When the space was clean, the male faced his female. Time seemed to stand still... and then finally, the porg opened his beak and emitted a sweet trill. He snapped his wings out, and this was it, this was the mating dance at long last—

A loud droning noise split the air, and the porgs fled with terrified squawks. Rey cursed up a storm—quietly, so as not to make the situation worse—then put her camera down and glared out of the narrow opening of the blind at the sky. It sounded like a plane, but why would one be flying that close overhead—

A loud bang was followed by a horrifying, metallic shriek. Rey jumped, then immediately began unzipping the flap of the tiny blind. The porgs were gone, anyway, and that had sounded an awful lot like a plane crash. Her heart went into overdrive as she sprinted down the hill towards the rough airstrip Han had carved out of the land.

A six-seater Beechcraft Bonanza rested at the end of the runway, and Rey could immediately identify the problem: the landing gear hadn’t been extended. Rey knew plane models from one of her foster moms—a woman who had been more enthusiastic about aviation than the children she was supposed to raise—but she’d never taken flying lessons, although someday she wanted to. Rey reached the edge of the runway just in time to see a man spill out of the opened door. He looked huge against the plane, all broad shoulders and long limbs. His hair was black and luscious, lifting in the breeze, and he wore... a tuxedo?

Rey didn’t know much about suits, admittedly. Maybe it was just a normal suit. But it was black and fancy, and his shirt and vest were also black, and the tie was, too. She wondered what the point of wearing so many layers was when they were all the same color.

“Fuck!” the man screamed, kicking the side of his plane. “Motherfucker, fucking hell—” He was an American, that much was clear. It was also clear that he was furious.

“Hey,” Rey called. “Are you all right?”

He jumped what must have been three feet in the air—those giant legs—and then turned on her.

“What the fuck?”

Rey blinked, taken aback by his vehemence. He was the one who had crash-landed on a supposedly deserted island, after all—shouldn’t he be excited to see another person? She nodded at the plane.

“That looks bad. Are you all right?”

“Thank you, princess, I had no idea. It isn’t like I didn’t try to extend them, you know. And the backup emergency extension system failed, too, because of course it did.”

“Of course I’m all right,” he grumbled, raking his hands through his glorious hair. “It’s just this motherfucking piece of shit that’s the problem.” He punctuated the words with another kick.

She took a few cautious steps closer. Then, because he seemed like an irritable prick and that was mischievous Rey’s catnip, she kept talking. “You know, I hear landing gear are important when trying to land a plane.”

“You know, I hear landing gear are important when trying to land a plane.”

“Thank you, princess, I had no idea. It isn’t like I didn’t try to extend them, you know. And the backup emergency extension system failed, too, because of course it did.”

“Do you think you can fly that thing out of here?”

He rolled his eyes. “It needs a prop overhaul, an engine overhaul, there’s damage to the belly skin, the flaps and flap mechanism are damaged... so obviously not.” He scowled at her. “Who the fuck are you, anyway?”
“My name’s Rey.” She marched towards him with her hand held out. He eyed her palm with derision for a few seconds, and Rey dropped her hand and scowled at him. Where did he get off being so hostile? “And I’m the only other person on this island,” she bit out, “so maybe you should try not to be an insufferable wanker.”

Did his lips twitch at that? She wasn’t sure. Regardless, a stern look quickly stamped itself on that long, strangely beautiful face. Big nose, eyes too high, lips too plush—yet somehow the disjointed features worked together. He looked edible.

Too bad he was apparently a prat.

“Well, Rey,” he drawled, “as lovely as this conversation has been, I need to get my plane fixed as soon as possible.”

She blinked at him, wondering how such a handsome man could be so annoying. “And yours?” she asked sweetly.

His brow furrowed. “What?”

“Typically it’s customary to state your name during an introduction.”

This time his lips definitely did twitch. He rolled his eyes. “Kylo Ren.”

“Kylo Ren.” She repeated it, trying not to let her disbelief show on her face. What sort of ridiculous name was that? “Well, Kylo Ren, let’s talk about your options. Do you have a satphone?”

He scowled at her. “No.”

Rey didn’t, either. “Well, then you seem to be in a bit of a quandary. There aren’t many aircraft mechanics on this uninhabited island.”

“You’re here,” he said acidly. “For reasons I can’t possibly comprehend.”

“I’m researching the mating dance of porgs.”

That actually got him to shut up for a few seconds. He blinked at her a few times, then looked away. One hand rose to rub the back of his neck. “I’m not sure what that means, but I don’t suppose you know how to fix airplanes?”

“Alas, I do not.” Rey wished she could, though. She’d always been fascinated by mechanical things, but she’d never even gotten the opportunity to fly a plane, other than on the flight simulator that was her main source of entertainment back home.

Kylo scowled, then fished his phone out of his pocket. Rey could have told him there was no service out here, but it was more fun to watch him turn in circles, his cell phone raised to the sky. Finally, he stopped the awkward waltz and flung the phone into the dirt. “Piece of shit,” he swore, scowling down at the phone as if it had personally wronged him.

Rey already understood a few things about Kylo Ren. He was a man who liked the finer things—the suit or tuxedo or whatever was evidence of that, not to mention the private plane—and he was the kind of man who was used to deflecting blame. If his plane crashed, it was the plane’s fault. If his phone couldn’t magically manifest a signal, it was the fault of the phone.

Rey wasn’t afraid of spoiled men with too much money and too little sense. She wasn’t scared of anyone, really—not since her worst foster family. Plutt’s fists still haunted her nightmares, and
compared to that, what was one petulant brat of a probable millionaire?

“You could ask me,” she said.

He switched his glare from the phone to her. “Ask you what?”

“How to get off the island.”

He inhaled a deep breath, and Rey had to suppress a smile at how irritated he was at needing to ask for anything. “How do I get off the island.”

The inflection didn’t make it a question, but Rey didn’t mind, because her answer gave her all the joy in the world. “You don’t!” she chirped. “Not until my friend Poe arrives in four days.”

Kylo’s eyes widened. “Four days?” His fists clenched. “Are you fucking kidding me?”

“Unfortunately,” she said, smiling at him insincerely, “I am not. You’ll have to fend for yourself until then.”

Kylo looked around almost frantically. “Okay, where’s the nearest building?”

“Building?” Rey asked, cocking her head. She was being an absolute bitch to this man, but he had been nothing but antagonistic towards her, and Rey didn’t tolerate bullshit. “What do you mean?”

“Building. Noun. A structure for sheltering humans.” Kylo waved his hand dramatically, and Rey realized at that moment exactly how big his hands were. It wasn’t like she hadn’t processed the sheer size of him already, but damn…

It didn’t matter, she told herself. He was an asshole.

“There aren’t any buildings,” Rey said. “It’s just you and me and a flock of porgs.”


“You thought what?”

Kylo shook his head. “Nothing. I just thought there would be somewhere for people to sleep.” He eyed her suspiciously. “Where do you sleep?”

Rey flushed and cleared her throat. “I have a tent.”

His brows slammed together. “So you’re a squatter? This is private property, you know.”

And this asshole had crash-landed, so how could he possibly know who owned this land or who was allowed to be here? Rey planted her fists on her hips and glared at him. “The owner gave me permission to be here.”

“Is that so?” He stepped forward, crowding her, and Rey felt the urge to step back, but she didn’t. She was determined not to let this man intimidate her. “Are you positive the owner wants you to be here?”

“He does,” Rey said, lifting her chin. “Although I’m not sure why it’s any of your business.”

Kylo huffed a little noise that might have been a laugh, then shook his head. “Whatever you’ve convinced yourself of, it’s wrong. You’re nothing. You don’t belong here.”
The accusation—*you’re nothing*—hurt terribly, but Rey had never given in to bullies. She advanced on him, steaming mad. “I’m nothing? What a declaration from the man who couldn’t even land his plane correctly.” She jammed her finger into his chest. “Who are you to tell me who I am or what I can and cannot do?”

Kylo blinked at her, his mouth agape. Maybe Rey should have felt uneasy about antagonizing him, but the truth was that this was *her* island. Sure, Han technically owned it, but no one spent as much time on Ahch-To as Rey. Who cared if some handsome, asshole pilot was here, too? Rey was the authority in this situation.

After a few long moments, Kylo sighed. He leaned in, and Rey stiffened as his breath puffed against her ear. “I’m sorry,” he said, his voice low and strangely compelling. “I’m a real dick when frustrated.”

“You think?” she asked, unwilling to let go of her pique so easily, no matter how sexy he sounded.

He drew back and gave her a devastating smile. It began with him biting his lower lip, then expanded into a full grin. Rey had never seen anything so glorious, and she realized she was swaying towards him like a mesmerized cobra.

*No.* The man was an ass. She refused to lust after him.

“Well, Mr. Real Dick When Frustrated,” she said, “I have things to do. Now that I know you’re uninjured, I’ll leave you to it.” She turned away, confident she’d struck the killing blow.

A massive hand circled her bicep, gentle yet firm at the same time, and Rey froze. She was just surprised, she told herself, even as her skin prickled and her heart started racing.

“Please,” Kylo said, his tone softer than it had been before. “I’m sorry I’m such a jerk. I just don’t know where to go or what to do.”

Rey sighed deeply. She had many fundamental flaws as a human being, and one of them was the foolhardy desire to help anyone who asked her for it. No matter how reckless or ill-advised, she couldn’t resist a pair of sad eyes and a sweetly-spoken ‘please.’

She turned on Kylo and scowled. “Fine. You can stay in my camp until Poe arrives.”

His face cleared, and his mouth tilted as if he was pleased by the news. “Thank you.”

She snorted and shook her head. “Don’t thank me yet.”
Chapter End Notes

NewerConstellations made me a beautiful moodboard, which I've added to the end of the chapter.

Thanks for reading! Comments make my heart happy, so please let me know what you think! The next chapter is Kylo's POV, and boy is he a hilariously snarky ass.
With a location selected, the porg waits for his prospective mate to approach. If she is intrigued enough to linger, he may begin making overtures.
Kylo had expected very few things from this trip to Ireland.

One: An awkward conversation with his father, probably culminating in shouting and broken glassware.

Two: A boring sojourn on an uninhabited rock as he documented the terrain for Snoke.

Three: The satisfaction of finally resolving an annoying loose end.

What he hadn’t expected was her.

Rey—and what the fuck kind of name was that for a girl? Kylo contemplated the mystery of her as he followed her up a blindingly green slope, his day bag slung over his shoulder. She was tough, he would give her that. Blunt, too. Disinclined to put up with his bullshit.

Kylo’s mouth curved a little as he thought about her fiery rebuttals. *Mr. Real Dick When Frustrated*, indeed. Kylo had no illusions about who he was—a cantankerous, awkward asshole—but there was something exhilarating about having someone else acknowledge it, too.

Most people were too intimidated by his bloodline and reputation. Last of the Skywalker legacy, heir to the family fortune, one of New York’s most notorious playboys… People tended to perceive material wealth as value. Not this girl, though.

She was an odd thing, clad in a baggy camouflage poncho over olive hiking pants. Her brown hair was drawn up in an unusual three-bun style, and although she wore no makeup, there was something arresting about her delicate features. When she wasn’t scowling at him, she was shockingly pretty.

Oh, who was he trying to kid. Even while scowling at him, she was devastating.

Kylo huffed for breath as he followed her up a steep slope, his gaze riveted to her ass. Or where her ass would be, if her figure wasn’t disguised by an enormous tent of a garment. He truly had no idea why this small, angry woman was camping on the island Kylo technically owned, but he couldn’t wait to find out.

The sky had darkened since his unfortunate crash landing—fucking malfunctioning landing gear, motherfucker—and soon a gentle rain was pattering against the grassy slopes and gray rocks. His suit was going to be ruined, a fact Kylo would have been more irritated by if he didn’t have a dozen identical suits waiting at home in his penthouse in Manhattan.

Ahch-To was just as forbidding as his uncle Luke had said it would be. The old hippie had been high out of his mind when he’d described the place that had hosted more than one of his drug-fueled vision quests. “Super green,” Luke had drawled, waving a lazy hand. “Very steep and rocky. Not friendly, but worth it anyway. The kind of place you can only know through experiencing her.”

Kylo had resisted pointing out that islands couldn’t be friendly, really, and that assigning a gender to a random rock in the Atlantic Ocean was illogical and probably a marker of some deep pathology that needed to be explored in therapy. And Kylo knew all about therapy, even though no therapist had ever succeeded in making him less of an asshole. At least the slew of shrinks he’d seen since adolescence had helped him rein in the worst of his temper.

The slope flattened out, and they reached a small, level area that was half grass, half stone. A craggy cliff rose above it, and nestled at the base was a tiny orange tent. A few plastic bins were stacked beside it, and a makeshift fire pit out front was streaked with soot.

“This is it?” Kylo asked, coming to a stop. Something like horror washed over him at the sight of the...
meager accommodations. When she’d said “You can stay in my camp,” he’d imagined a log cabin or something (admittedly, he’d never been a particularly outdoorsy type). Was this how she lived?
Sleeping on the ground beneath a scrap of fabric?

“Home sweet home!” Rey chirped, seemingly unruffled by his tone or look of pure disgust. She gestured at the grim setup. “It has everything I need.”

That seemed unlikely. Kylo’s mind supplied a plethora of things she was lacking: running water, comfortable furniture, central heating, the ability to grab a bagel and coffee from the nearest bodega... a toilet, for fuck’s sake. “How long have you been here?” he asked incredulously.

She shrugged. “Only a few weeks.”

Only a few weeks? Kylo wanted to break out in hives just looking at the meager accommodations. He wiped raindrops from his forehead. “I see. So... where do I stay?”

She stared at him, looking rather alarmed, and Kylo wondered if she hadn’t actually given this much thought. Her eyes darted between him and the tiny orange tent. “Um,” she said, and then her eyes flickered to his day bag. “I don’t suppose you have a tent in that bag?”

He bit his lip to restrain the caustic words that wanted to pour out. “No,” he said succinctly.

Her cheeks turned a charming shade of pink, and she shifted from foot to foot. “Then I suppose… I guess you’ll have to stay in my tent.”

That quickly, Kylo’s irritation turned into something hotter. His dick twitched in interest, like the traitor it was, and suddenly all he could think about was lying next to her. Rey. The strange, angry, poncho-clad woman who had called him a insufferable wanker. He couldn’t make out any of her figure under the camouflage drapery she wore, but somehow he knew her body was amazing.

He swallowed hard. “I don’t think there’s room.”

She looked at him like he’d said something stupid. “It’s a two-person tent. There’s plenty of room.”

If that had been designed for two people, he was the king of England. The orange abomination wasn’t even the size of his bathroom. “If you say so,” he said skeptically.

She blew out a frustrated breath. “Look, it’s either this or you can sleep in your plane. Or outside on the rocks, if you prefer? There’s probably going to be a torrential deluge tonight, but far be it from me to deny you your precious space.” She stared at him like wrath personified, and Kylo found himself almost intimidated—an extremely rare sensation that made his dick take notice again. He shook his head. “Good,” she said. “Then shut the fuck up about my tent and acknowledge that I’m being nice.”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said. She narrowed her eyes at him, and he felt the sudden urge to laugh. He ignored the urge, obviously. “So your friend gets here in four days?”

She guided him to the tent, and while the cliff provided some shelter from the rain, errant gusts of wind whipped stray drops into his face. “Yeah,” she said, unzipping the tent and gesturing for him to get inside. “He’s going to take me back to Dublin. You should be able to arrange help there.”

Kylo toed off his shoes before climbing inside. Half of the tent was taken up by a simple sleeping pallet, a pile of blankets, and a few pieces of luggage. The rest was bare, and he sat awkwardly in the open half. He opened his day bag, hoping he’d been more practical with his packing than he remembered.
Granola bars, a bottle of whiskey, a T-shirt and pajama bottoms, two extra dress shirts, two pairs of boxer briefs, extra socks, a few toiletries, an ebook reader, and various chargers for his electronics. Oh, and condoms, because he never left home without them, even if he hadn’t gotten laid in months. He hadn’t anticipated spending more than a day or two on the island, and he definitely wasn’t prepared to sleep in a tent with a stranger for multiple nights.

Rey watched him rifle through the bag. “Do you have a sleeping bag?”

“No.” Honestly, he’d thought there would be at least a cottage on the island. It was Skywalker property, and Han visited here a fair amount, so why on Earth wouldn’t there be? But as he’d circled the island, it had become apparent that this truly was the middle of nowhere. It wouldn’t have been a problem if not for the *fucking landing gear*.

“Blankets?” Rey asked hopefully.

He sighed. “I can grab emergency blankets from the plane.”

Rey nodded. “Better do it fast. A storm is rolling in.”

By the time Kylo returned, it was absolutely pelting down rain. His suit was soaked through, his dress shoes were ruined, and he was in a foul temper. He unzipped the tent, prepared to launch into a tirade—and then noticed the makeshift pallet that had been constructed on what he now supposed was his side of the tent. Several coarse blankets had been laid out with care, and Rey’s side of the tent looked less cozy than it had before. Rey herself sat on top of her sleeping bag, now wearing a clinging long-sleeve shirt, her poncho folded up in a corner.

“You don’t have to give me your blankets,” Kylo said past a strange lump in his throat. He tried not to look at the soft swell of her breasts under the white shirt.

“It’s only a few,” Rey said with a shrug. “The sleeping bag is warm enough. I just like extra blankets when I’m moving around camp.”

He had a vision of her pacing around the clearing with a blanket trailing behind her like a cape, and it was bizarrely charming. She must get cold easily—if she was Kylo’s to take care of, he would keep her draped in his sweatshirts and coats all the time.

Wait, why was he thinking that? He’d just met the harpy, and he was pretty sure she hated him, offer to share her tent aside.

“So,” Rey said as Kylo laid out the emergency blankets on top of the bed she’d created for him. “Who are you, Kylo Ren?”

What a fucking question. Clearly she had no connections in the echelons of the rich and famous—Han aside, and the old man refused to call him anything but ‘Ben’—or the name would have rung a few bells. He found he liked the anonymity. “Just a cranky asshole who doesn’t enjoy the outdoors.”

She smiled a little at that, and he felt good at having provoked a reaction besides fury. “But where are you from? What do you do for a living?”

“New York. And… uh, I suppose I’m in investment. Stocks. Things like that.” Truthfully, Kylo didn’t really have a job—he was just rich, and the full-time employment of the rich was becoming even more rich while living as lavish and pointless an existence as possible.
There had been a time when he’d railed against that lifestyle. In college, he’d dreamed of abandoning his family ties and becoming an author. He’d managed to abandon the family, for the most part, but even with his name change, the legacy had been harder to shake. Eventually, the inertia of being the Skywalker heir had taken over, and his twenties had become a meaningless parade of liquor, women, and reckless pursuits.

At thirty-three, he’d slowed down on all three, but the reputation was impossible to shake. He was the ne’er-do-well of the Skywalker line, and if the gossip rags couldn’t find evidence of wrongdoing from him, they made it up.

“Why were you trying to land on Ahch-To?” she asked, tilting her head curiously. “It seems like a strange place for a man in a tuxedo to want to visit.”

He squinted at her. “This isn’t a tuxedo.”

She rolled her eyes. “Whatever, like I’m supposed to know men’s fashion.” Eyeing him, she bit her lip. “Speaking of which, you should probably change out of that. You’re soaked.”

Kylo was very aware, but the prospect of stripping down in front of Rey was as alarming as it was enticing. His face grew hot, and he tried to remember the last time he’d blushed. “Um, okay.”

“I’ll turn around,” Rey assured him hastily. Her cheeks looked a little pink, too. She faced the back wall of the tent, and then, for extra measure, covered her eyes.

Kylo stripped awkwardly, peeling the sopping wet suit off. He stripped all the way down, shivering in the cool air of the tent as he wiped the stray moisture off his skin with one of the extra dress shirts. Then he hurriedly changed into his plaid pajama bottoms and a plain black T-shirt. The black dress socks were thin, but better than nothing. “It’s safe,” he told her.

Rey turned around, and her gaze immediately dropped to his chest. Her eyes widened a little, and her pink lips parted. Kylo sucked in a surprised breath, wondering if she was actually attracted to him. He knew he was built, but he’d been a complete asshole to her, even worse than normal. Surely that canceled out his muscles.

Her gaze drifted up to his face, and then she frowned and leaned forward. “Did you hit your head?”

“Why, curious if I’m always this much of a jerk?”

She crawled towards him across the blankets, and that really shouldn’t have looked as sensual as it did, but he was mesmerized by the sway of her hips. He’d been right—she’d been hiding a glorious ass under that poncho. She came to her knees in front of him and tentatively reached towards his head, brushing his damp hair away from his forehead. “You’re bleeding.”

“I am?” he asked, hardly processing the words. He was struck stupid by the feeling of her fingers on his skin.

“I didn’t see it before, with your hair slicked over your forehead.” She showed him the tips of her fingers, which were indeed wet with blood. “Let me take a look.”

She rummaged in her bag and retrieved a simple first aid kit. She wiped the wound clean and applied antiseptic, and okay, Kylo could feel it now, a stinging line down the right side of his forehead. “How bad is it?”

“You won’t need stitches, but it’s probably going to scar.” Rey dabbed antibiotic ointment onto the cut, her movements incredibly gentle, then applied a patch of gauze, securing it in place with medical
tape. She was so close to him, her small, enticing breasts directly in his line of sight. She smelled intoxicating—like rainwater and a hint of sweat, something fresh and wild and perfect. Kylo wanted to grab her by the waist and tug her onto his lap.

That was not something one did with a person who had only minutes before called one a dick and a wanker, though, so Kylo resisted.

Rey sat back on her heels. “There, all better.” Her eyes traced over him. “Any other injuries I should be aware of?”

“There’s an uncomfortable throbbing in my pants. Want to check it out?” He cleared his throat. “Ah, no.”

“Good.” She retreated to her side of the tent, and even though it was a move of maybe three feet, considering the limited space, he wanted to protest the loss. Was she really this bewitching? He’d never been so infatuated with a complete stranger before, much less one so bedraggled and combative. “So why are you on the island?” she asked.

She was some kind of nature researcher, so Kylo obviously couldn’t tell her the truth—I’m here to take a look at the island before selling it to an oil and gas company so they can strip it bare—so he lied. “Tourism. I was heading to Cork, but I saw the airstrip on the island and got curious. Unfortunately, that’s when the landing gear malfunctioned.” He hastily redirected the focus to her. “Why are you here?”

A breathtaking grin spread across her face, making her eyes sparkle and her cheeks dimple. “Researching the most wonderful bird in the world.”

And that’s how Kylo ended up listening to a thirty minute lecture on *porgus adorabilis*, its habitat, diet, status (extremely endangered, too bad for it when Snoke Oil took over), and the elusive mating dance she was hoping to document. Kylo leaned back in his blankets, amused by her passion for the birds and reluctantly fascinated by how much she knew about them. The mating dance, in particular, sounded ridiculous.

“So they just… hop around in front of the bird they want to have sex with?” It was a weird sort of foreplay, but Kylo could understand the impulse. If hopping would impress Rey, he would probably be doing his best impression of a pogo stick right now.

Rey’s cheeks pinkened. “That’s the thing: I don’t know. Birds of paradise perform extremely elaborate and colorful displays, but we have no idea how the porgs entice their mates.” Then she frowned. “I was about to document the very first one, but your plane scared them off.”

“Sorry,” he said, although he wasn’t *that* sorry. He would much rather have her here in this tent with him than out there in the rain watching random birds fuck.

She bit her lip and looked up at him almost shyly. “Since you don’t have anywhere to be for the next few days…”

“Yes?” He leaned forward, hoping against all logic and reason that some amazingly depraved proposition was about to fall out of her lips. *Will you help me reenact the porg mating dance? Will you please spend days fucking me silly?*

“Do you want to come watch the porgs with me tomorrow?”

“Oh.” Well, Kylo didn’t exactly have better plans, and watching porgs sounded really boring, but at least he would be near Rey, and it couldn’t be more boring than sitting alone in this tent. “Sure, that
would be neat.”

That radiant smile bloomed again. “Wonderful. You’re going to love them; I just know it.”

She had a lot of faith in these birds if she thought they were just the thing to entice a cranky Manhattan millionaire whose main hobbies were drinking, shouting at people, and wallowing in a deep sense of malaise. Either that, or she had a lot of faith in him to be the kind of man who could experience wonder about the natural world.

No one had ever had faith in Kylo before, though, and that wasn’t about to change, so he just plastered on a rakish grin and ignored the odd ache in his chest. “I’m sure it’ll be riveting, sweetheart.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks again to NewerConstellations for writing such a fun prompt! This story was a delight to write.

Yes, the tent is BB-8. 😊

Kylo’s Beechcraft Bonanza. This plane doesn't have the range to cross the Atlantic, fyi. Kylo rented it in Ireland. This may not seem like an important fact, but my father (who thank GOD does not read my fanfic) was my aviation consultant for this, and he would probably murder me if I had Kylo fly from New York to Ireland in a Bonanza. (Ask me how he feels about the aviation plot in the absolutely delightful movie Seeking a Friend For the End of the World.)

Next up: Kylo and Rey go birdwatching together in a very small wildlife blind.

Comments and kudos bring me joy! I’d love to hear what you think of snarky asshole Kylo and takes-no-shit Rey. How do you think she'll react when she finds out Kylo’s going to sell Ahch-To to Snoke Oil? Is he ever going to tell her he's Han's son? And how long will it be before sharing a tent becomes... complicated?
Before the dance can begin, the male porg must first greet his partner with song.

Rey normally slept extremely well in her tent—her sleeping bag was comfortable, and she’d grown
used to sleeping on floors during her childhood—but it was much harder to fall asleep when a giant, muscular man with puppy dog eyes and a sly sense of humor was lying right next to her. His chest rose and fell with even breaths, but Rey had a feeling he wasn’t asleep, either. And then, when he finally did slide into slumber, he was somehow even more distracting. He made little noises—grunts and sighs during his dreams, rustles as he shifted in his blankets. When he turned to the side and flung an arm out, just barely grazing her side, her heart nearly stopped.

Rey hadn’t been this close to a man in years. Grad school didn’t leave much time for dating, and in general, Rey was too wary to indulge in one-night stands. Back at home, she had a drawer full of toys to slake her needs, but out here it was just her and her hand, and she hadn’t felt the need to masturbate since she’d arrived.

She did now. The space between her legs was wet and throbbing, and she shifted in her sleeping bag, briefly considering the option before just as quickly discarding it. She absolutely could not get off to thoughts of an unconscious stranger, especially when that stranger was lying right next to her. That would make her the world’s biggest creep.

Instead, Rey sighed and turned away from Kylo, resigning herself to a sleepless night.

She must have passed out eventually, because she opened her eyes to the familiar orange glow of dawn seeping through the walls of the tent. She groaned and buried her face into the pillow, cursing her regular sleeping schedule for waking her at this hour. She was miserable and exhausted, her head aching from the restless night.

She sat up and rubbed her eyes, then glanced over at Kylo. She yelped, then clapped a hand over her mouth, hoping the noise wouldn’t wake him. It was just that he’d kicked off some of his blankets in the night, and—

He was sporting morning wood. Quite a lot of morning wood, if that bulge in his plaid-patterned pajama bottoms was to be believed. Holy shit, was he for real?

He shifted, and Rey quickly averted her eyes, not wanting to be caught leering at him like a pervert. She studied his face, instead, tracing the bold line of his nose and the plush bow of his lips. All right, she was still leering, but at least she wasn’t eyeing his genitals like an all-you-can-eat buffet anymore.

Rey took buffets very seriously.

Kylo’s eyelashes fluttered open, and he looked at her drowsily. Then he blinked a few times, awareness returning to his face and sharpening his expression. “Good morning,” he rasped.

“Good morning!” She tried to sound cheerful, like nothing was wrong, nothing at all, not even the massive cock rising from his blankets like the Loch Ness monster. The words came out far too high-pitched.

He grimaced. “Don’t tell me you’re one of those annoying morning people.” He shifted again, and his eyes shot wide. She kept hers fixed firmly on his face as his gaze flickered down and panic flashed across his expression. He grabbed a blanket and tugged it up over his waist, then sat up, rubbing a hand through his hair as his cheeks flushed pink. “I, ah, how did you sleep?”

“Fine,” she croaked, even though it was an utter lie. “You?”

“Also… fine. Yes. Fine.”

They sat in uncomfortable silence for a few moments, and then Kylo awkwardly moved towards the tent flap, the blanket still wrapped firmly around his hips. “I’m just gonna go… you know… relieve
myself.” He winced at the words. “Urinate, I mean. That is…”

“Fine,” Rey chirped in that same high, frantic voice. “Good idea. I, uh, I’ll relieve myself once you’re back.”

He shuffled out, and once the tent flap was zipped shut behind him, Rey groaned and buried her head in her hands. It was going to be a long few days.

Kylo trudged up a hill after Rey, contemplating several things at once.

One: Her frankly unbelievable ass. Since it was sunny this morning, her poncho was tucked into her backpack, and he had an unimpeded view of her backside. Even the loose fit of her brown hiking pants couldn’t conceal the glory of that muscled curve.

Two: The odds of a man surviving four whole nights lying mere feet away from the object of his intense sexual attraction.

Three: Why on Earth he’d agreed to go bird-watching, rather than just seizing the moment—and his stiff morning erection—and tackling Rey onto her sleeping bag.

There was no way she hadn’t seen his morning wood. The thing had practically been waving a flag, and while it had been mortifying at first, in retrospect, he was glad she’d seen it. He knew he was impressively endowed, and her flushed cheeks, squeaky voice, and dilated pupils had told him she’d appreciated that fact. He knew from firsthand experience that seeing something you wanted without being able to touch it only made you want it more.

Despite their initial antagonism, he had a sneaking suspicion that Rey might actually want his dick. And if she didn’t, at least she was aware of it now, and that could only be a good thing, right?

She led him between two jagged cliffs into a sheltered, shadowy space filled with shrubby vegetation. Most of the island was just grass, mud, and rock, so it was surprising to see the low-lying bushes. Even more surprising was the camouflage tent pressed up against one of the rocks.

“Another tent,” he said flatly. “Oh, joy.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “It isn’t a tent. It’s a blind.”

He eyed it skeptically. It looked haphazardly constructed and was even smaller than the orange tent, only rising to his waist and maybe three feet wide. It was banded with a wide line of fine mesh, presumably so she could study the clearing while kneeling inside, and holes had been cut in the mesh on each side.

“Come on,” she said, unzipping it and gesturing for him to join her. “We don’t want the porgs to notice us.”

If the porgs were too stupid to notice a tent where there hadn’t been one before, they were probably too stupid to care about people, but Kylo followed her, anyway, crouching down awkwardly so he wouldn’t get the knees of his pajamas muddy on the ground outside the door. Thankfully, the inside had a canvas floor. He crawled up next to Rey, realizing that while he could barely kneel upright, there was a benefit to such a small space. They were shoulder-to-shoulder and thigh-to-thigh.

Rey stripped a waterproof tarp from a pile of unknown objects in the corner, revealing a camera, a field notebook, and some sort of recording device with cords trailing out of it and passing through
tiny holes in the wall of the tent. “This connects to waterproof microphones outside,” she told him as she fiddled with the dials.

Then she leaned across his body, brushing against his chest as she reached for a video camera lashed in place on his side of the tent. She braced her hand on his thigh with a smile and a muttered apology, and Kylo was extremely glad he’d relieved his morning erection before following her here.

“I keep the video camera and microphones running all day, even when I’m back at base camp for meals. At night, I usually watch whatever footage I’ve missed.”

“You didn’t last night,” he said, struggling to breathe as she finished turning on the camera and eased back to her knees beside him.

She shrugged. “You were very distracting. It doesn’t matter—I’ll catch up on it tonight.” She slanted a look up at him through her long lashes, and with her face so close to his, he saw that her eyes were a lovely green-streaked hazel. “You can watch too, if you like.”

He would do just about anything if she kept giving him looks like that. “Sounds fun.”

She giggled and shook her head. “I can tell you’re trying very hard to be interested in the porgs, Kylo, but you can tell me if you don’t want to do this. There’s lots of hiking you can do around here, and I brought a few books...”

“I want to,” he said with a vehemence that startled himself. He placed his hand over hers, and she stilled at the touch. “I can hike or read books whenever I want. How often do I get the opportunity to learn from the world’s leading porg expert?”

She rolled her eyes. “I shouldn’t have told you that.”

He squeezed her fingers and let go. “There’s no need to downplay your accomplishments.”

Rey stared at him, looking transfixed by the words. Then she shook her head and returned her attention to her gear. She extended a portable tripod for the camera, then slotted the lens through the hole in the mesh. She opened her lab notebook in her lap, pulled out a pen, and sat back on her heels.

“What do we do now?” Kylo asked.

“We wait. Quietly.”

And wait they did. Kylo tried to initiate conversations with her a few times, but she kept her responses to brief whispers. Apparently quiet was extremely important so as not to alarm the porgs, which was ascribing a lot of awareness to birds that hadn’t realized this blind wasn’t part of the natural landscape.

To entertain himself, he studied her notebook pages. Her handwriting was truly abominable, a cramped, spidery scrawl that dipped beneath the lines frequently, as if she’d gotten so excited by what she was recording that she hadn’t been able to keep her writing level. A few surprisingly good sketches showed a bird with wide, alarmed-looking eyes, a small beak, and a fat body.

“That thing looks ridiculous,” he whispered, pointing at one of the sketches.

She giggled. “I know; don’t you just love it? I always say it’s like Puss in Boots meets a penguin.”

That didn’t sound like a particularly healthy combination, but he could see what she meant. There was something distressingly adorable about the black, shiny eyes she’d drawn.
Rey clutched his arm suddenly. “Look,” she whispered.

Kylo looked, although he would have preferred to focus on her hand on his arm. A small, drab brown bird with a white breast was hopping across the clearing. It looked this way and that, cocking its head as it examined its surroundings, and when it glanced towards the tent, Kylo realized the sketches hadn’t been exaggerating. It really was disgustingly cute.

“He’s scoping out the terrain,” Rey breathed in Kylo’s ear. “If he decides it’s safe, he’ll start preparing the ground for a courtship dance.”

He turned his head, nearly brushing her mouth with his as he pressed his lips to her ear. “How do you know it’s a male?”

He heard Rey’s swallow before her hot breath puffed against him again. “The orange markings on the head. In the animal kingdom, the males are the flashy ones. They want to impress the females.”

“How does it work?”

She licked her lips, and Kylo’s gut stirred with primal hunger. “Sometimes. But only if they try very hard.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” He bit his bottom lip, then smirked and returned his attention to the porg outside, enjoying the little sigh she expelled. She was interested, all right, but Kylo knew better than to give in to the urge to kiss her right away. Anticipation made the eventual surrender that much sweeter, and besides, his little scientist wouldn’t be able to focus properly on their kiss when her birds were performing courtship rituals outside.

The porg hopped and pecked, clearing twigs away. Rey started photographing its actions, her eye glued to the camera’s viewfinder. A smaller, drabber porg approached, peering out hesitantly from under the bush. This must be the target of this ludicrous ritual.

The male porg fluffed itself up, revealing more of the orange feathers around its head. It warbled an odd little trill, extended its wings, and hopped once to the side.

“Oh,” Rey breathed, her shutter clicking. The porg bounced again in the same directions, head rocking from side to side as its wings stayed extended.

A blur of black-and-white entered the clearing from above, streaking towards the ground. A large seabird with a sharp beak, or some kind of hawk. It gripped the dancing porg in its talons and ripped it off the ground, winging away as the female cawed in distress.

“Fuck!” Rey swore a little too loudly, and the female porg startled and fled. Rey slammed her fist against the ground repeatedly. “Fuck, fuck, fuck.”

“Hey,” Kylo soothed, sliding his hand under hers so she stopped hitting the ground. “This isn’t your last chance to see it.”

She wiped a few tears away with her free hand. “It might be. I’ve been here for weeks, Kylo, and this is only the second mating encounter I’ve seen, and both were interrupted.” She glowered at him.

He raised his hands defensively. “Hey, at least I had no intentions of killing and eating the porg.”

He thought it was a decent enough joke, but to his alarm, Rey’s tears cascaded more freely. She buried her head in her hands, shoulders shaking, Frantically wondering how to fix this, Kylo slid an
arm around her. “What is it?” he asked, daring to press a kiss to her hair.

“They’re endangered,” she said in a tragic voice. “And we just watched one die.”

“Oh.” Right. He’d forgotten that bit—or rather, he’d deliberately chosen not to think about it. He shifted uncomfortably, very aware that once he sold this land to Snoke Oil, the remaining porgs on the island would probably die, too. Granted, there were still two islands inhabited by porgs, from what Rey had told him, but wiping out a third of an endangered species in one go was a little harsh, even for him.

He hadn’t thought about ethical concerns like this in a long time. As a teen and young adult, he’d wanted to break away from the Skywalker financial and political legacy, but his dreams of what he would do with his independence had been murky. In the end, he hadn’t done much at all.

It raised the question, yet again, of why Han had signed the island over to Kylo a month ago, since Kylo was the sort of person to immediately run out and sell it to a multinational oil conglomerate.

Ahch-To had been given to Han in the divorce settlement a decade previously. It was the dramatic sort of Skywalker “fuck you” that normal people would never understand— thanks for breaking my heart, now enjoy being responsible for a deserted, bird-shit-covered rock in the middle of the ocean. Maybe a similar sort of spite had led Han to sign it over to Kylo for his thirty-third birthday, since Kylo’s own version of thanks for breaking my heart had involved breaking Han’s nose… but maybe not.

“It’s a remarkable place,” Han had told Kylo when they’d met for an awkward coffee to discuss terms. “It might not look like much, but I think you’ll be pleasantly surprised.” He’d winked. “Next month is the perfect time to visit.”

Had Han known Kylo would run into Rey here? She’d said she had the owner’s permission, after all…

Rey was still sniffing, and Kylo decided abruptly that even if his own moral compass tended to spin wildly, there was one simple thing he could do right now that would make both of them happy. “We’re not leaving this island until you see a porg mating dance,” he vowed.

Fuck fixing the plane, fuck heading back to his pointless existence in New York, fuck Richard A. Snoke’s insistence that they sign the deal as soon as possible. Kylo had all the power in that negotiation, and it was perfectly natural for him to wait a few months before considering next steps.

Rey turned wide, tear-spangled eyes on him. “But Poe’s coming in three days to pick us up.”

He still didn’t know who the fuck Poe was, but money fixed all sorts of problems, and Kylo could give a bribe as well as anyone else. “So? I’ll pay him extra to bring us a satphone. Then you can contact him for a pickup as soon as we see the dance.”

Her mouth quivered. “Why would you want to stay?”

Because you’re the smartest, most interesting person I’ve ever met and your ass is the eighth wonder of the world and I can’t stand seeing you cry. “It’s an adventure,” he said, trying to play it cool. “And besides, I don’t have anywhere important to be. Might as well watch some birds.”

“Oh.” She bit her lip, and he got the impression he’d disappointed her somehow. But then her face cleared, and she gave him a heart-stopping smile. “Thank you, Kylo. And who knows? Maybe we really will see another mating dance today.”
Maybe they would, but Kylo found himself really hoping they didn’t.

Chapter End Notes

This is the slowest burn I’ve ever written, so I hope everyone’s okay.

Do I know anything about ornithology or wildlife blinds or how cameras and microphones work in the wilderness? No!

Thanks for reading! Let me know what you think in the comments.
An amorous porg must follow proper courting etiquette. Following introductions, he must bow to his prospective mate in acknowledgment of the dance about to commence.
That night, Rey sat on a rock and stared into the pathetic fire she’d constructed, disheartened by a long, fruitless day of waiting for more frisky porgs to appear. She’d heard a few squawks throughout the afternoon, but they were typical territorial calls, not mating songs, and as the hours wore on, she’d resigned herself to never getting as close to a mating dance as she had that morning.

Her poor, dancing porg.

“She’s moaned.” Kylo dropped onto the rock beside her, holding out a bottle of brown liquid.

She blinked at it for a few seconds, then laughed. “Seriously? You don’t have a sleeping bag or proper clothes, but you did pack whiskey?”

“And granola bars,” he said, unwrapping another of the little bars he’d been munching on all day.

She shook her head. “Oh, no. You’re not going to subsist just on granola bars and whiskey. I’m going to feed you proper food.”

Ten minutes later, she pulled a pot of instant noodles off the fire and handed him a spork. He nudged the noodles suspiciously. “This is your idea of proper food?”

She smacked his shoulder with the back of her hand. “I’m sorry I didn’t bring any caviar on my three-week-long camping trip.”

He huffed an amused breath. “Brat.”

“Pompous ass.”

“Absolutely,” he agreed, bringing the spork to his mouth. “Ooh, that’s good,” he said after swallowing the first mouthful. His eyes closed in bliss. “I forgot how amazing instant ramen is. I used to eat it in college when I was too lazy to cook.”

She was still captivated by that half-moaned phrase: *Ooh, that’s good.* She wanted to hear him say that again, but in a very different context. She dismissed the horn thought. “It was all I could afford when I was a teenager.” She chuckled a little and shook her head, knowing she wasn’t being entirely honest. “It still is, actually. My grad school stipend isn’t much, and a few bartending shifts a week don’t make up the difference.” She took a swig directly from the whiskey bottle, enjoying the burn of the liquor.

Kylo froze with noodles hanging from his mouth. He swallowed, then set the pot down on the rock, abruptly seeming to realize she wasn’t eating. “Where’s your spork?”

She waved her hand dismissively. “I only have one. You’re my guest, so you get to go first.”

He scowled and shoved the spork at her. “Absolutely not. I demand you eat.”

“Fine.” Rey wasn’t about to fight him on that. She sucked in an enormous mouthful of noodles, smiling as the familiar flavor burst on her tongue. Sure, she’d eaten it for far more meals than was healthy over the course of her life, but it really was tasty.

“You said it was all you could afford as a teenager,” Kylo said slowly. “Why were you buying your own food as a teenager?”

Rey shrugged uncomfortably. Sometimes she forgot that most people hadn’t been fending for themselves since childhood. “I was abandoned at a women’s shelter as a little kid and grew up in foster care. The first few homes weren’t so bad, but Plutt got me from ten to eighteen.” She shivered
a little, remembering the massive man and his even more massive fists. “He didn’t believe in coddling his foster kids.”

The firelight reflected off Kylo’s intense eyes and clenched jaw. “And feeding you was considered coddling?”

She nodded, gulping down more food. Even now, it was hard not to feel like eating was a race. Like someone might swoop in like that hawk from earlier today and snatch it out of her hands. “Food, water, a bed…”

“You didn’t have a bed?”

“Or a sleeping bag.” It was uncomfortable telling him this, but Rey had learned early on that lying about her circumstances brought nothing but trouble. Besides, if he was going to be disgusted by her background, it might as well happen now, before she’d done anything stupid like kiss him. “So I actually like camping. It’s comfortable. The first few months I spent at uni, I couldn’t fall asleep on the dorm room bed. I’d grab my pillow and curl up on the floor, which let me tell you is a fabulous way to freak out your new roommate.”

“Fuck.” Kylo ran a hand over his face. “Rey, I’m so sorry.”

“Why? It wasn’t your fault.”

“No, but it sure as fuck was that son of a bitch’s fault,” he growled, then looked at her intensely. “Is he still alive, Rey?”

A little prickle went down her spine, and she had the alarming feeling that if the answer had been ‘yes,’ Kylo would have arranged for another outcome. She shook her head. “He had a few too many at the pub one night and drove home. He’s gone.”

“Good,” Kylo said, and Rey was pleased by the malicious glee in his tone. Too often people reacted with pity and soft words to her backstory, but all Rey had ever wanted was for someone to get angry on her behalf. For someone to want to fight for her.

“Anyway,” Rey said, dismissing the past with a flippant wave of her hand, “that’s over now. Nowhere to go but forward. What about you? Where did you grow up?”

His jaw tightened, and he took a sip of whiskey. Rey nudged the noodles towards him, and he took a few bites before answering. “I grew up in New York. In… well, in a mansion.”

Rey wasn’t surprised. He had a private plane and flew around in suits that probably cost more than her monthly rent. “That sounds nice.”

He scowled into the fire, moodily pushing the noodles around with the spork. She wanted to snap at him that if he was just going to play with his food, he ought to give it to someone who would properly appreciate it, but she restrained herself. Talking about the past was hard.

“My family was—is—very important,” he said. “A political and banking dynasty. They established themselves when Rockefeller was taking over New York, and it’s just been up from there.”

“Huh,” Rey said, thinking of Han. “My friend—the one who owns this island—married into a family like that once. He said they were all crazy.”

Kylo laughed a little, but it didn’t sound happy. “He’s right. That kind of money—it makes you think you’re more important than everyone else. It blinds you to what people actually need. My
grandfather was the worst—embezzling, Ponzi schemes, shady deals with the mob… you name it. Domestic abuse, too. He married a girl from a political family, and she was dead within the year.”

Rey gasped, pressing a hand to her mouth. “Oh my God, Kylo, that’s awful.”

He reached for the whiskey again. “I didn’t know about that bit until later. I actually idolized him when I was a fucking idiot straight out of college. Thought it was cool he’d used all that power and influence just to break the law, like he was some kind of outlaw hero.” He shook his head, looking disgusted. “Of course, I realize now exactly how stupid that line of thinking was.”

“Well, I idolized Robin Hood growing up,” Rey said, wanting to offer some sort of sympathy, although his grandfather sounded truly awful.

“Yeah, except my grandfather only took the money; he didn’t give it to the poor.” Kylo frowned. “Actually, I’m pretty sure the charity he founded to combat childhood hunger was the one he was embezzling from.”

“Christ,” Rey said, grabbing the whiskey and knocking back a shot. “Well, at least you stopped idolizing him eventually?”

He shrugged. “My mom established about a billion charities trying to make up for her father’s actions, but that just meant she was never home. I was raised by a parade of nannies.”

“And your father?”

Kylo scowled at the noodles like they’d personally offended him. “It’s… complicated. He didn’t really fit in, so eventually he stopped trying to. Spent most of his time on the road working in shipping, which I’m pretty sure just means he was doing something illegal.”

Rey shook her head. “Rich people are so strange.”

He snorted. “You can say that again.”

She studied him, hardly noticing when he nudged the noodles back towards her, even though he hadn’t eaten that much. He had a difficult face to read, but she’d started to pick up on his cues. The clenching of his jaw, the twitching of a muscle under his left eye, the way he compressed his lips. Right now he looked almost… lost as he looked up at the night sky.

“And are you strange, Kylo?” she asked, scooping up the last few mouthfuls of noodles.

That reclaimed his attention from wherever it had drifted. He looked at her with a lazy smile that made her insides flip over. “Oh, definitely.” The smile widened into a grin. “But not as strange as you, I’d wager. How did you end up here?”

Rey launched into the tale of grad school, the arm wrestling competition at the bar, and her subsequent friendship with Han Solo. She thought it was a funny story, but Kylo seemed a little tense as she spoke fondly of the cantankerous old man who’d given her the research opportunity of a lifetime.

“I don’t think he’s close with his family, either,” she said. “That’s probably why he took me under his wing.”

Kylo made a weird little noise. “Wonder why that is.”

She shrugged, not understanding why his eye was twitching. “He’s divorced—from the rich lady, I
told you. The one who gave him an island in the divorce settlement.” Rey grinned as she knocked back more whiskey, enjoying the contented haze that was settling over her. “I have a feeling it wasn’t supposed to make him happy, but he likes coming here for solitude sometimes, and he’s pleased someone’s getting use out of it. He has a son, too, but I don’t think they talk much.”

“Mmm,” Kylo said, chewing on his lips. “That sounds like something he probably contributed to, if he divorced the kid’s mom.”

“Yeah, I guess.” She frowned. “But he said his son—Ben’s his name—is kind of spoiled and aimless. Like, he has all this money and potential and doesn’t know what to do with it, so he just drinks and fights and sleeps his way through Manhattan—”

“I don’t want to talk about shitty families anymore,” Kylo said, standing up and snatching the whiskey bottle out of her hands. He stormed into the tent—as much as a six-foot-plus man could storm while trying to zip himself into a miniature orange tent—and Rey stared after him, wondering what had set him off.

Then she realized. “Oh.” Kylo was rich, too, and he was obviously aimless if he could decide on a whim to spend extra time on Ahch-To with an eccentric ornithologist. His answers about his career had been vague. And with that body and that face, he had probably fucked his way through New York, too—a thought that made Rey feel a little sick. For some reason, she’d started thinking of him as her aimless millionaire; she hadn’t even thought about the crowds of anonymous women who had probably enjoyed him.

He might even know Ben Solo. Might be friends with him. And even if he wasn’t, he’d probably heard the words Rey had so thoughtlessly rattled off as a condemnation of his own lifestyle.

And even if they were—because although Rey could understand the loneliness of a childhood like the one Kylo had had, she didn’t see why that should affect his actions now—she didn’t want to hurt him. He was the first man who’d shown interest in her or her research in ages.

Rey put out the fire, rinsed her cookware with water she’d boiled earlier in the week, and packed everything up. Then she took a deep breath and headed into the tent.

The interior was lit by a small lantern. Kylo was sitting upright at the head of his pallet, staring glumly at the whiskey bottle. He looked up at her as she entered the tent, then turned his face away.

“Hey,” she said softly, toeing off her shoes before settling onto the blankets in front of him.

A muscle in his jaw twitched. “What do you want, Rey?”

She grabbed the whiskey from him, took another deep gulp, and then screwed the top on and tossed it in a corner. “For you to stop being a massive grump,” she said. His head snapped to her, his mouth and eyes opening wide in outrage, so she lifted her hand to forestall whatever bitchy thing he was about to say. “And to apologize. Maybe… maybe you know Ben. Or maybe you think you’re like him. I didn’t mean to hurt him. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

His jaw worked like he was chewing on the inside of his cheek. “You were only repeating what Han Solo said.” He spat the name with rather more vehemence than Rey thought was deserved. They locked eyes for a long moment, and then Kylo sighed, and his shoulders drooped. “He’s right, anyway. Or rather, you’re right about me seeing myself in that description. I’ve wasted a lot of my life, Rey.”

She crawled closer, until her knees were brushing his shins where he sat cross-legged. “Don’t say
that,” she said, reaching forward to cup his cheek. “We all make mistakes.”

He closed his eyes, as if the sight of her pained him. “You don’t. Look at you—you’re what, ten years younger than me? And you’re already getting a PhD and saving the planet. I’ve alienated my entire family, I have no real friends, since people only care about my money and reputation, and I haven’t used my money for anything good. I’ve spent my life chasing pleasures that never made me feel any better.”

The bald confession broke something inside Rey. Kylo Ren was hurting deeply—she saw it now, and wondered how she hadn’t before. Didn’t she know all about how anger and defiance were easier to express than pain? Didn’t she recognize her own defense mechanisms when she saw them in another?

Wanting to bring him comfort, she leaned in while his eyes were still closed and brushed her lips over his.

It was the tiniest contact, there and gone, but Kylo’s body jolted like she’d electrocuted him. His eyes shot open, and he stared at her with a mix of confusion and hunger. “Rey? Did you just…”

She nodded. “I did. Because I don’t think you’re a bad man, Kylo. You listen to me when I talk about porgs, and you got angry about my childhood and made me eat most of the instant noodles, and you want to be a better person than who you were as a young man.” She shrugged. “Those are all signs of a good man, as far as I’m concerned.”

He stared at her like she’d just hung the stars in the sky for him, his eyes wide and dark. His nostrils flared, and she could see the pulse fluttering in his throat, fast and hard, just like hers was.

Then Kylo leaned forward and sealed his lips over hers, and Rey was lost.

She moaned and opened her mouth to him, rejoicing when he slid his tongue inside. His hands settled on her waist, pulling her towards him, and as he stretched his legs out, she scrambled over his lap, keeping her lips glued to his the entire time. When she finally rested against his chest, her body tight to his and his growing erection nudging against her core, she released a heavy sigh. It felt like she’d been waiting for this forever.

“My sweet Rey,” he murmured in-between long, drugging kisses. One of his hands drifted up to the back of her neck, and the other dropped to the swell of her ass. He nudged her against him, encouraging her to rock in his lap. “God, you’re beautiful.”

Rey sank her hands into his luscious hair, nipping at his plush lower lip. He tasted amazing—like the noodles and whiskey, yes, but there was also a flavor there that she couldn’t describe as anything but good. He tasted like Kylo. She rolled her hips, dragging her sensitive pussy over him, and the spark generated by the intimate contact made her moan.

Kylo made a little noise of approval before kissing her deeper. He kept guiding the movement of her hips with one hand while the other squeezed her breast through the thin fabric of her shirt. She wasn’t wearing a bra—what was the point, when her tits were small anyway and only the porgs were here to see?—and her nipple puckered under his palm. “Fuck,” he panted as he rolled the sensitive bud in his fingers. “I need to see you, Rey.”

She nodded, and it was all the encouragement he needed. He toppled her back onto the pallet of blankets and stripped her shirt off. He knelt between her legs for a long moment, raking his hot gaze over her, and then his big, broad hands were covering both breasts. “Gorgeous,” he breathed as she arched into his touch. “You have the prettiest tits in the world, Rey.”
It was flattering, but also a reminder that he probably had an extremely large sample size to compare them to. Rey pushed the jealous thought aside. Whatever—or whoever—Kylo had done in the past, he was here with her now. “Your shirt,” she demanded, tugging at the fabric.

Kylo complied, tugging it off over his head with one hand to reveal the most massive, muscled torso Rey had ever seen. “Holy shit,” she said, staring at the expanse of chiseled flesh. He even had a V of muscle leading down into his plaid pajama bottoms, and Rey had been half-convinced that feature was mythical. “What do they feed you in the States?”

He chuckled and lowered himself over her, pressing his bare chest to hers as his hips settled between her thighs. “I’m more interested in what you’re going to feed me now.”

Rey kissed him frantically, pressing her breasts into his firm muscles and squeezing his hips with her thighs. She hadn’t gotten laid in years, and the handful of men she’d slept with had been mediocre lays. She’d never had good oral, and every time she’d gotten it, her partner had made it clear he was doing it out of obligation. Was Kylo actually proposing going down on her? Did he actually sound excited about it?

His hand inserted itself between them to play with her nipples again, then stroked down her side, hovering at her waistband. “How about it, Rey?” he asked, toying with the line of fabric. “Can I taste you?”

She was screaming internally, out of her mind with excitement, but Rey somehow managed to nod. Kylo quickly scooted back, working on the fastenings of her hiking trousers, and she was grateful she’d managed a sponge bath with her boiled water that morning. He stripped the fabric down her thighs, removed her socks, and then hooked his finger in the waistband of her simple white panties.

Rey was embarrassingly wet. Everything tingled, and her pussy ached to be touched, kissed, penetrated. Rather than look at her, though, Kylo settled his hips between her legs again and kissed her soundly. “I’m going to worship you, angel,” he promised against her lips. “And I’m going to make it last a long time.”

He broke away at last, only to suck a bruise into the underside of her breast before soothing the spot with his tongue. Rey bucked against him uncontrollably. “Please, Kylo,” she panted, going out of her mind with lust. He hadn’t even touched her yet, and her pussy was quivering from the tension. It wasn’t just a result of her long dry spell, she knew: it was him. He called out to something primal in her, an animal need that went far beyond mere attraction.

“Shhh.” He soothed her as he kissed his way down the flat plane of her belly, lingering to nibble at her hipbones. “I’m going to take care of you, Rey.”

The way he said that… Rey shivered all over. Because honestly, she was the only one who’d really taken care of her needs before, both sexual and otherwise. Even if this was just sex, it was still a gift.

He settled between her thighs, lifting her legs to loop over his shoulders, then occupied himself with staring at her. Rey fidgeted, a little uncomfortable with the intensity of his gaze. “I haven’t exactly been able to shave,” she started, but Kylo silenced her with a long, hot lick that parted her lower lips.
Rey gasped and jerked against him.

“You’re beautiful whether or not you shave,” he told her. He trailed a hand up her hair-dusted leg as if to emphasize the point. “You could be as furry as... as a Wookiee, and I would still want to fuck you.”

Rey giggled a little. “File that away as one of the simultaneously most and least sexy things I’ve heard in the bedroom.”

“We’re technically in a tent,” he said, smirking up at her. “Now stop talking and let me get to work.”

Rey stopped talking.

Kylo started by simply breathing on her, hot puffs of air that brushed her drenched folds. Rey squirmed, both loving and hating the anticipation drawing her up tight. She wanted him to eat her out, but she was still a little mortified, and he was just lying there breathing her in, and what if she smelled terrible?

“God, you smell so fucking good,” he said, putting that fear, at least, to rest. He dragged his tongue through her slit again, then groaned against her sensitive flesh. “You taste good, too.” Then he settled in, looping his hands around her thighs to hold her in place as he started consuming her with hot, wet kisses. He licked her in a long stripe that terminated with a swirl over her clitoris, and this was already a universe away from Rey’s previous experiences. She moaned, biting down on her hand to muffle the cry.

“I want to hear you, angel,” he said, repeating the motion. “There’s no one here but us.”

“And the porgs,” she said, the words muffled by her hand.

“Maybe this will inspire them.” He winked at her, then started eating her out in earnest, and it was devastating. His mouth was everywhere—nipping at her inner thighs, sucking her labia, suckling her clit hard enough to make her shout. His tongue pushed into her, and that was a revelation worthy of celestial trumpets. God, how was he so good at this?

_Because he’s done it a thousand times before, probably_, the insecure voice in her head said.

Rey desperately wanted it to shut up—she tried to be a sex-positive feminist, and that meant removing the stigma from casual sexual encounters, but God, she felt downright possessive of him. Like she’d uncovered a new species of creature and got to name it and write articles about it and love it forever, except no, not love, because _wow_ was that crazy. But she wanted him to feel possessive of her, too, and she was just lying here, taking pleasure and not giving it...

Kylo rolled his tongue over her clitoris in tight little circles. “You’re thinking, aren’t you?” he asked during a pause between licks.

Rey groaned. “God, Kylo, it feels so good, but I’m not used to this.”

He looked up at her curiously, replacing his tongue with his fingers as he considered her words. “Not used to oral?”

She laughed a little desperately. “That, too. I mean, obviously I’ve done it. I’m not a virgin. But I’m not... used to being vulnerable.” That sounded absolutely fucking pathetic, and Rey cringed. A muscled mountain of a man was currently worshipping her cunt, and rather than enjoying the moment, she couldn’t get out of her own head. “Yeah. Let’s just pretend I didn’t say that.”
“No,” Kylo said, still circling her clit with his forefinger. He didn’t look alarmed or upset, just patiently curious. “Why does it make you feel vulnerable?”

Rey swallowed, wondering how to articulate this strange feeling in her chest. “Because… because it’s just about me?”

“Ah.” Kylo lowered his mouth to lick a slow, leisurely trail over her entire pussy. When he came back up, his lips glistened with her wetness. “You think you’re the only one getting pleasure out of this.” He buried his face back between her legs, and as he shook his head, his lips and chin rubbed perfectly over her. “I fucking love this, Rey. And sure, you can put your mouth on me later if you want—and only if you want—but this isn’t transactional. You don’t owe me anything, and I’m not doing this to earn future favors. I want to do this. I’ve been wanting to do this since practically the first moment I saw you. I just really—” he swirled his tongue in her center— “want”— he traced her contours with the stiffened tip— “to make you come.” He punctuated the words by rolling her stiffened clit between his lips, and Rey cried out.

Kylo popped his head up with a grin. “Now, do you want to talk about it some more, or may I please give you as much pleasure as you can possibly stand? I’m doing it for me, I swear.”

Rey choked on a laugh that turned into a sob as he slipped the tip of his middle finger into her. “Do it,” she said.

Kylo did.

He dedicated his mouth to her clit as he replaced his questing finger with two. The thick digits slipped in, stretching Rey enough that she kicked her head back and moaned. His fingers were so much bigger than hers.

He curled them as if beckoning her forward, and Rey lost her mind.

“Oh my God, Kylo,” she gasped. She tried to pump her hips for more of the sensation, but he still had her pinned with his free arm. “Holy fucking shit.”

He hummed against her, then crooked the fingers again and again as he repeatedly flicked her clit with his strong, talented tongue. Rey scrabbled at the blankets, then grabbed his hair, grinding against his mouth while he made encouraging sounds against her pussy. She was going to die, she absolutely was. Pressure built in her lower belly, and her muscles tightened in preparation for the orgasm of her lifetime. She was mumbling incoherently, a mix of curses and pleas, and in response, Kylo just worked her harder.

“Come for me, angel,” he said against her, and then he was sucking and curving those fingers and making the most delicious noises and fuck—

Rey exploded. Her pussy throbbed against his fingers, and to her astonishment, a gush of fluid spurted out of her. Oh, fuck, she’d gotten his face all wet, but holy shit, this was amazing, and she couldn’t stop grinding and shuddering and moaning—

When the last tremors finally ended, she collapsed on the blankets, utterly boneless. He sat up, wiping his mouth with his forearm, and she realized then exactly what she’d done. “Oh my God, I’m so sorry, I got you all wet—”

“Thank you,” he said fervently. “Jesus, thank you. And yeah, that can happen when you stimulate the G-spot. Don’t worry.” He leaned down over her, his brown eyes warm and his lips tugging up in a heartbreakingly big smile. “That was perfect. Thank you so much for letting me do that.”
She moaned and giggled and covered her eyes, having no idea what the proper response was. She’d orgasmed on her own, sure, and a few partners had delivered in the bedroom, but nothing had prepared her for the mind-blowing experience of having Kylo Ren go down on her. She’d squirted, which was not a thing she’d ever experienced before, and she was boneless and silly and sated in a way that made her feel almost high. “Wow,” she said, and even her voice sounded slurred. “You are really good at that.”

Kylo lay down next to her and gathered her in his arms, grinning against her temple. “You inspire me, sweetheart.”

Rey rested for a few minutes, nestling into his chest. He was so broad and strong, so warm; he made her feel safe. Once her heart had slowed a bit, she looked up at him. “Kylo, do you want—”

“Yes,” he said, nodding vehemently. “I have condoms.”

Rey had been going to offer him a blowjob, but the words gave her pause. “You didn’t pack food, but you packed condoms?”

He shrugged. “Force of habit.”

It was a jarring reminder that she and Kylo came from different worlds. He was a millionaire playboy, and she was an impoverished ornithologist who happened to be the only woman on the island he’d crash-landed on. She sat up, abruptly feeling cold.

“Rey?” he asked, placing a hand on her forearm. “What is it?”

She sighed and squeezed her eyes shut. “I’m sorry, I’m really not used to this.”

“What do you mean, this?”

She swallowed hard. “One-night stands. Or… whatever this is to you.”

A long, horrible pause followed the words. The blankets shifted, and when Rey opened her eyes again, he was staring at her with a crease between his brows. “Rey, what are you talking about?”

Oh, fuck, she was ruining this, wasn’t she? “It’s just…” She waved her hand, as if that might help explain the mix of insecurity and possessiveness and want swirling around in her head. “You’re a playboy, right?”


“So I’m just… I’m not sure how to handle this. I really like you, Kylo,” she rushed to explain. “And I want to make you come, and I would like to give you a blow job, but…”

“But what?” he asked, his throat bobbing.

Rey took a deep breath. She would either damn herself with these words or find salvation. “I don’t want to be just another notch in your bedpost.”

Silence fell as Kylo considered her words. She shifted, feeling awkward and afraid and like a world-class bitch for interrupting this carnal encounter with what he would probably see as an accusation. And shit, maybe it was. Rey didn’t know how other people lived; she just knew how she lived and what she wanted.

Finally, Kylo swallowed and looked away. “That’s fair. And honestly, Rey, you aren’t a one-night
stand or a—a conquest, or whatever. I don’t know what this is yet, but it isn’t that."

“Okay,” Rey breathed. “Then can I go down on you?”

Kylo sighed, then closed his eyes, looking pained. “No, angel,” he said at last. “I just… I want you, but I don’t want to frighten you off. And you’re right, I haven’t lived the best life. I’ve done a lot of things with a lot of people, and most of them meant nothing, and I’m not sure that’s any better.”

Rey touched his cheek. “The past is the past. I’m just… this is all really new and overwhelming. And I really like you, and it’s okay that you’ve been with other people, because I have, too. I’m just—fuck, I’m not saying any of this right.”

His eyes opened at last, and his lips quirked up a bit. “No, I understand. You’re not a sex-on-the-first-date kind of girl. Or sex-on-the-first-bird-watching-session kind of girl, rather. And I haven’t really proven myself to you, so how can you know I’m sincere?”

“I believe you,” she said, cupping his face in her hands. “The fact that you’re talking about this with me at all means a lot.” She’d had several guys walk out on her when she’d expressed reservations about moving too fast. And yeah, she’d gone into this fully expecting to have sex with him, but now her head was in the way, and she wanted him to understand.

“Rey.” He fixed her with a firm stare. “This isn’t a one-night stand, and because it isn’t, I don’t want you to give me a blow job or fuck me tonight. We’re going to sleep now, okay? Although I am going to go outside and take care of this—” he gestured at his erection— “first. I would like to cuddle after, though. And tomorrow, we’re going to see if we can document that elusive mating dance, and after that… who knows. We’ll decide together.” He kissed her forehead. “Sound good?”

Tears pricked her eyes, because it sounded **so** good, even though she felt guilty about not giving him an orgasm tonight. “How are you so amazing?” she asked, smiling up at him.

He rolled his eyes. “What happened to **insufferable wanker**? I like enthusiastic consent, but I’m still an asshole, I promise.”

“No,” Rey said, burying her face in his chest. “You really aren’t.”

Chapter End Notes

So it finally got a little steamy! But not all the way steamy, because Kylo and Rey are complicated people who need to sort through their feelings. But they’re communicating, and that's great!

I love comments, so please let me know what you think of this story. Thanks for reading!
The dance demonstrates the male’s interest and suitability as a mate, but the encounter is not a one-sided act. The female porg determines the outcome.
Kylo knelt in the blind beside Rey, wondering if perhaps Dante had forgotten a level of Hell.

Not that he wasn’t happy to be there—he was—but having Rey this close to him made every nerve ending extra-sensitized. He felt the tiniest shifts of her body next to him, and his ears were attuned to her every breath.

Fuck, he was a goner. Totally willing to sit in silence for twelve hours, looking for birds, so long as she was next to him.

He didn’t regret pulling back the previous night—as much as his dick would have preferred an immediate resolution, Rey was the reason he’d been turned on in the first place, and since Rey had been anxious and uncomfortable, he’d stopped. It didn’t matter if she’d been willing to suck his dick. When he finally got Rey under him for real, he wanted it to be because both of them knew it was right. No hesitation. No doubt.

Maybe it wasn’t a stance anyone would have expected a notorious playboy to take, but Kylo had always required consent from his partners. Most of those women had been sophisticated and detached, wanting nothing but an orgasm and a story to tell in the morning. Sex was easy enough when the demands on both sides were simple.

Rey, though… Kylo wanted Rey in a way that went beyond her body. He wanted her wit and her sass, her gorgeous face and her impressive intellect. She wasn’t a one-night stand, even if Kylo had yet to figure out how to incorporate her into his life.

So the previous night, he’d jerked off over a cliff—for the second time in one day—before cuddling her on their combined pallet of blankets and sleeping bag, and while it was the most sexually frustrated he’d been in his life, it was also the happiest. She fit him, and he fit her.

Having overcome her insecurities to give her a screaming orgasm was the cherry on top.

“Look,” Rey whispered, digging her hand into his arm. He was so attuned to her that even that little touch made his dick twitch; it was frankly ridiculous, like he was a fifteen-year-old all over again.

He focused on where she was gesturing and saw nothing at first, but then one of the bushes trembled. A white face surrounded by orange feathers peeped out, and then a plump brown avian hopped into the open. It pecked at the ground, grabbing stray blades of grass and flinging them aside: preparing the stage for its mating dance.

Kylo found himself holding his breath, almost unbearably excited for what they were about to witness. He’d spent hours in this blind with Rey—although not as many hours as she had spent, to be sure—and he suddenly felt like a child on Christmas morning, tense and anxious under his blankets in the pre-dawn. Like the most amazing thing in the world was about to happen, and he might crawl out of his skin waiting for it.

The porg cleared the twigs and detritus from its space, working so thoroughly that Kylo wanted to scream “It’s good enough!” at the ridiculous thing. He half-expected another hawk to come swooping out of the sky to snatch the idiotic bird up while it was distracted. It was no wonder porgs were endangered, considering their very intense focus on setting the stage for seduction.

Then again, Kylo probably wasn’t any better. He was just lucky there were no horse-sized birds around to carry him off for supper.

Rey had released his arm to fixate on her camera. She took endless photos, the steady press of her finger almost mesmerizing. Was she seriously going to look at every single one of the thousands of
shots she’d taken over this trip? Knowing Rey’s passion for porgs, it was likely, but Kylo struggled to think of a more boring endeavor—and he’d spent fucking hours in this tiny tent, although Rey’s presence had certainly alleviated the boredom.

A smaller brown female approached, cocking her head to study the male with enormous black eyes. Kylo crossed his fingers and held his breath, hoping she would find the male’s offering satisfactory.

Jesus Christ. In only a few days, he’d gone from indulging in decadent debauchery with Manhattan’s wealthiest scions to crouching in a tent in mud-spattered pajamas, waiting for two small birds to fuck.

And he’d never been happier.

He could hear Rey nearly hyperventilating next to him, so he laid a hand on her back and stroked soothingly. She didn’t acknowledge it verbally, too caught up in her documentation, but he felt her press back against him slightly, acknowledging the touch.

The easy intimacy soothed an ache in Kylo’s heart he hadn’t realized was there, and a stupid smile spread across his face. No one had ever turned to him for comfort before, he realized. He’d never been anyone’s rock.

Kylo Ren, multi-millionaire playboy, had wanted for nothing his entire life. He’d had money, fame, girls… so many doors had opened to him just by virtue of his existence. He’d led a charmed life by any definition of the term.

But something had been missing all that time, something that left him feeling dark and hollow, and although countless therapists had encouraged him to explore that fundamental lack, he’d never particularly wanted to. Money was a balm that could be applied to any wound, after all, and when that didn’t work, there was always the oblivion of alcohol or sex.

Now that he was experiencing what it felt like to be needed, even in this limited way, he realized exactly what he’d been missing.

Companionship. Comfort. Compassion. The chance to soothe another person and be soothed in return.

“Kylo!” Rey’s breathy exclamation was barely audible, but her excitement might as well have been electricity in the air. “It’s happening.”

She sounded like she might cry, so Kylo kept rubbing her back as he leaned in to peer through the mesh. The porg had apparently set the scene to its satisfaction, because now it stood in the center of the cleared circle, chest puffed out and wings extended. A breathless moment passed, then two…and the porg began to dance.

The bird hopped to the left, dipping his right wing low to brush the ground. Another hop, and then he moved his head from side to side on his neck a few times, maintaining eye contact with the female the entire time. Then the porg jumped to the right, repeating the same dipping motion with its wing.

The female porg cocked her head and stepped a pace closer.

Apparently encouraged by this sign of interest, the male porg moved into the next portion of his dance. He puffed up even further, until a ruff of orange feathers surrounded his neck like he was some Elizabethan lord. He chirped and squawked, bouncing quickly from side to side like his tiny legs had springs. It was frankly hilarious, and Kylo couldn’t stop smiling.

The female porg cocked her head and stepped a pace closer.

The female extended one wing and dipped in her own version of a bow.
“Oh my God.” The whisper came, surprisingly, from Kylo, who hadn’t been able to restrain his enthusiasm. “She’s so into it.”

Rey made a little noise that sounded like a restrained chuckle, although she never moved her focus away from her camera.

The male porg hopped; the female curtsied. It was truly a dance, the two strange creatures drawing closer to each other with each repetition of their odd movements. The bouncing acrobatics of the male were, quite frankly, ludicrous, but there was something touching about the way the female watched him and eased closer, encouraging him with wide sweeps of her wing.

He was advancing; she had chosen not to retreat.

Kylo didn’t even realize that his hands were clasped at his chest until he also realized that he was whispering “Please please please” under his breath. Rey needed to see this, and since Rey was apparently now the planet Kylo’s satellite orbited around, he needed her to see it, too.

A few more springing leaps from the male, a sweeping curtsy from the female… and they were finally close enough to touch.

“Oh.” Kylo recoiled at the abrupt flurry of feathers as the male awkwardly and enthusiastically mounted the female. “Wow.”

“Yeah,” Rey breathed, still taking endless photos. “Isn’t it amazing?”

Amazing was… one word for it. Kylo’s face scrunched up as he considered the copulating birds. He wasn’t sure what he’d expected, but this inelegant, screech-filled furor wasn’t it. The male porg looked like he couldn’t even balance on top of the female, and once he managed to, it was over extremely quickly. The porgs promptly separated, ruffling their feathers and grooming themselves with their small black beaks.

He cleared his throat. “That was…”

“Incredible.” Rey was still taking photographs, but she drew away from the viewfinder a bit, and once Kylo saw the tears streaming down her cheeks, he understood why. “Nature is so beautiful.”

He was oddly charmed by her enthusiasm for what looked like a pretty dismal lay, but he couldn’t help but feel that the event hadn’t lived up to the hype. “I guess I was expecting… more?”

At that, Rey pulled back from the camera just enough to shoot him a skeptical glance. “What, you wanted foreplay?”

Admittedly, Kylo had no idea what foreplay would look like when porgs were involved, and he didn’t particularly care to imagine it, either. “It was just so… fast. And clumsy.”

“It’s a little hard to balance. There’s no penetration, you know.”

He coughed into his fist. “Uh, what?”

Rey nodded, as if whether or not birds had penetrative sex was a perfectly normal topic of discussion—and for her, it undoubtedly was. “Both males and females have cloacas. The cloaca is a cavity at the end of the digestive tract. It’s where urine and waste come out, but it’s also the opening that leads to the bird’s reproductive organs.”

Kylo grimaced. “Efficient.”
Rey didn’t seem to register his distaste. “So the male emits sperm through his cloaca and rubs his opening against the female’s opening, and ideally it ends up fertilizing an egg.” Her voice was hushed but enthusiastic, the kind of tone Kylo generally reserved for a limited edition single malt scotch.

“Wow. That’s…”

Rey grinned at him. “Super fascinating?”

“I was going to say appalling.”

Rey giggled. “Welcome to the animal kingdom, Kylo.”

It was possible the porgs were engaging in post-coital cuddles, but Kylo couldn’t rip his attention away from the strange, brilliant goddess kneeling next to him. He stared at Rey as she kept taking photographs. Whenever Kylo had imagined his ideal woman—which, admittedly, hadn’t been often—he’d imagined someone sleek and sophisticated. The kind of high-gloss woman who would be fine with a largely carnal relationship, who lived her own life and would let him live his. The sort of woman to be kept at arm’s length.

Faced with this grimy, freckled angel and her extensive knowledge of cloacas, Kylo was forced to acknowledge that he’d never had a fucking clue about what he wanted.

“Rey,” he said, abruptly swamped by a tidal wave of lust. “Do you have to keep taking photos?”

“Only while they’re here. Once they’re gone, we can leave the video camera running and head back to base camp.” She nibbled her lip, still focused on the viewfinder. “I hope they never leave,” she confessed.

He wasn’t sure why, since all the porgs seemed to be doing was preening, but Kylo sighed and accepted the time constraint. This was fine. Fabulous. It didn’t matter than Kylo’s plans to kiss Rey were entirely dependent on the whims of a horny bird.

They were already pressed against each other’s sides, but Kylo wanted to get even closer—maybe that would help convince her to wrap up this observational session early. He wrapped his arm around her, then trailed his fingers gently over her abdomen. Her breath stuttered, and she mashed the shutter button far too aggressively.

“What happens now?” he whispered, his lips brushing her ear. He caught the lobe between his teeth and gently tugged.

Rey shivered, then turned a broad grin and those devastating dimples on him. “It’s fascinating, actually. Look at the way the male is preening for his mate.”

Kylo sighed.

“He’s adjusting his feathers until he looks his best,” Rey continued, either ignoring or entirely oblivious to Kylo’s attempts at seduction. He was being upstaged by a bird: a new low. “Ooh, look! Now they’re grooming each other. That’s a very good sign.”

Kylo eyed the stubby brown shapes across the clearing, which were closely entwined as they ran their beaks over each other’s feathers. “Is it?”

“Porgs mate for life. But since no one’s ever seen the mating dance before, we don’t know how that contract is made—whether any successful mating encounter ends in a lifetime bond, or if it’s only in
special cases.”

Kylo shifted uncomfortably, unable to stop thinking about his own aspirations for a successful mating encounter. “So the preening means they’re caring for each other?”

“Exactly!” She beamed up at him. “You’re a natural at this, Kylo. You’d make a great ornithologist.”

She returned her attention to the camera, cooing endearments at the birds under her breath, and Kylo smiled at how adorable she was. Her praise made him feel strange—it had been a long time since anyone had commented on anything but his muscles or his money. Absolutely no one had ever said something as simultaneously outrageous and flattering as “You’d make a great ornithologist.”

But there was something appealing about the idea, even though his experience of ornithology so far involved camping in the mud and waiting eight hours at a time for some birds to mash cloacas together. This slow-paced scholarly quest was so far removed from his debaucherous Manhattan lifestyle that it was like being on another planet, and Kylo felt like he could take a deep breath for the first time in years.

He kept his hand on her waist, although he’d given up on immediate seduction—how could he possibly compete with preening porgs? He liked touching her, though, liked the easy comfort of it. It felt like they’d been doing this together for years, rather than a few days.

“Oh,” Rey said, reaching over to grip his thigh, although her eye was still glued to the viewfinder. “Look, Kylo! This is extremely unusual. They’re doing it again!”

He sighed and shook his head before dutifully fixing his attention on the hopping, squawking birds outside. At least someone was getting laid.

Chapter End Notes

I hope the mating dance lived up to the hype! There’s still another mating dance to come, of course...

I love reading your comments, so I’d love to know what you thought of this little chapter. Thanks for reading!
If the female porg appreciates the male's dance, she will reciprocate with her own. Then, together, they will perform the oldest dance in the world.
Rey was ecstatic. Over the moon. Positively giddy.

She nearly skipped down the trail to base camp, and she felt light enough to waltz to the moon. “It was amazing!” she exclaimed, twirling in a circle with her arms outstretched like she was in the freaking Sound of Music. “Kylo, no one’s going to believe it. Ten times! They mated ten times!”

“I can hardly believe it, and I was forced to witness it.” His tone was dry, but his lips tilted into a genuine smile as he watched her cavorting over the moonlit grass.

Seized by the urge to make that smile blossom into a full-blown grin—an expression Kylo didn’t seem particularly familiar with—Rey grabbed his hands and dragged him to a large, flat patch of grass. Then she positioned them into a dancing frame and started spinning him in circles, humming a tune under her breath.

He barked out a surprised laugh. “I think I’m supposed to lead, Rey.”

She cocked her head. “Can you?” All she knew of dancing came from movies, so she had no idea of proper technique. She’d never even attempted a waltz with a real human before, although she’d spun around her kitchen more than once with an imaginary partner.

In response, Ben tightened his arms around her, bracing her with one hand on her shoulder blade. He stepped forward, the tension in his arms pushing her back in tandem, and then he was sweeping her over the grass like a prince from a fairy tale.

“Oh my God, you’re good at this,” Rey gasped, somehow keeping up with him despite not knowing the steps. His firm touches on her back and hand guided her through the movements.

“It’s a requirement of growing up in high society,” he said. “All the good little heirs and heiresses must learn to dance and use the proper cutlery, but heaven forbid we do anything as plebeian as get a job.”

She snorted. “High society,” she parroted, putting on her poshest accent. “Well, aren’t you impressive, Mr. Ren?”

He grinned down at her, then abruptly swooped and picked her up in his arms bridal-style. She squawked in alarm, then burst into giggles as he strode towards their tent like a man on a mission. “I’ll show you impressive, Miss Niima.”

He took his hands off her only long enough to unzip the tent flap, and then they were tumbling to the nest of blankets together, mouths colliding and hands seeking with desperate hunger. God, Rey had needed this. She’d barely been able to focus during parts of the afternoon, too aware of his thigh pressing against hers and the heat of his hand on her belly. Oh, she’d known he was trying to seduce her away from the blind, and if her dissertation hadn’t been on the line, she might have let him succeed.

Now, though, she could have him. Porg mating had been fully documented, and Poe wasn’t flying in to pick them up until tomorrow morning. She had all night to enjoy Kylo.

And she planned to—fully, this time.

“God,” she gasped as he pulled away from her mouth and kissed a hungry trail down her neck. His hand slid under her shirt to cup her breast, and her hips jerked in response to the heady stimulus. He nudged her thighs wider, then settled fully between her legs, nibbling at her neck and rolling her nipple in agile fingers while he rocked against her.
“You can just call me Kylo,” he murmured into her skin.

Rey rolled her eyes. “That joke is so overused.”

His warm breath huffed against her skin as he chuckled. “You don’t let me get away with anything, do you?”

“Oh, I’m about to let you get away with something.” She grinned wickedly as he pulled away from her neck and stared at her.

Kylo swallowed hard. “What…” His voice came out rough, and he cleared his throat before trying again. “What, exactly, are you going to let me get away with, Rey?”

She lifted her head off the blankets to seize his lips in a searing kiss. “Everything,” she said once she’d thoroughly tasted his lush, gorgeous mouth. “All of it.”

Kylo’s entire body jerked, and his cock pressed hard against the sweet spot between her thighs, making her squirm with delight. “Are you sure?” he asked, maintaining intense eye contact. “We don’t have to go all the way.”

Rey kissed him again, then rocked her hips. “I’m sure. I want to, Kylo. I want you.”

The breath shuddered out of him, and he closed his eyes, looking almost pained. When he opened them again, Rey was thrilled by the look of possessive intent in them. “We can stop at any time,” he told her, rolling his hips to rub his hard length against her clitoris. “Just say the word. But until then... I’m going to take everything you’re offering.”

Rey moaned. “Please take it, Kylo.”

He slammed his mouth over hers, sliding his tongue deep as he kissed her with a fiery passion Rey had never experienced before. He was so intense, devouring her like a starving man as he thrust against her in a rhythm that was going to send Rey through the roof if he kept it up. “You’re amazing,” he said, breaking away to nibble down her neck. “God, I was hard all afternoon.”

“Well, the porgs were pretty stimulating.”

Kylo drew back to kneel between her legs, and then, to her surprise, he rolled her onto her side and delivered a spank to her backside. The stinging blow made her gasp as her pussy clenched. “Naughty,” he chided.

She laughed breathlessly as he returned her to her back and started working on the fastenings of her trousers. “You mean cloacas don’t turn you on?”

He skewered her with a glare that would have been far more intimidating if his lips weren’t twitching. “If you use the word ‘cloaca’ again, I’m going to walk out of this tent.”

“No, don’t leave...” Rey’s protest turned into a moan as he stripped her trousers to her knees and roughly palmed her between her thighs. His hand was so big, covering all of her, and the way he worked the heel of his palm against the top of her sex was divine. Her panties were wet, already soaked with her need for him.

Kylo noticed, too. “Fuck, Rey. Were you wet for me today?”

She nodded. “It was torture, being so close to you in that blind and knowing I couldn’t have you yet. And when you put your hand on my stomach... all I wanted was for you to slide your fingers into
He did so now, hooking those long fingers beneath the gusset of her panties and tugging them aside. The index finger of his other hand trailed over her wet folds, charting her contours. “You have the most gorgeous pussy,” he said before dipping the finger into her entrance. He played with her lightly, never pushing in too far, and although Rey tried pushing into his hand to get the penetration she craved, he continued to deny her.

“Please, Kylo,” she said.

His eyes flicked up from her pussy. “What do you need, Rey?”

“Want you to touch me. Finger me. Lick me…”

Kylo smirked and withdrew his hand entirely. Rey stifled her protest when he tugged the panties down her thighs until they bunched with her trousers around her ankles. He worked on the laces of her boots, then stripped her clothing away until she was bare from the waist down. “This needs to go, too,” he said, rucking up the hem of her thermal shirt.

When she lay fully nude before him, he sat back, taking his time as he perused her body. It hardly seemed fair, since he was still clothed in the same awkward combination of dress shoes and pajamas he’d been sporting since the crash. “Take off your clothes, too,” Rey said, nodding at his pajama bottoms. A magnificent bulge strained against the plaid, and she was desperate to see what he was packing.

He grinned and stripped off his shirt, and Rey was struck all over again by how big he was. He dwarfed her, an endless expanse of pale skin over hard muscle. He toed off his shoes and socks next, then knelt up and gripped the waistband of his pajamas. Rey watched with bated breath, desperate to get her first look at Kylo Ren’s dick.

He cocked one arrogant eyebrow. “Are you sure?”


“I’m just saying,” he said, easing the waistband down just enough to reveal a trail of black hair, “I don’t want to intimidate you or anything.”

Rey rolled her eyes. “Oh, shut up, Ren. It’s not like I haven’t seen a dick before.”

He shrugged. “All right, if you think you can handle it.” And then he stripped his pajamas and underwear down to his knees with one smooth motion, pausing to let her appreciate the sight.

And holy fucking shit, Rey was not sure she could handle that at all. It was… it was…

Glorious.

Long, thick, and ruddy, the smooth, swollen cap already glistening with precum. Her mouth watered looking at it, and her hands twitched in anticipation. Could she even wrap her hand around the entire thing? “Oh my God,” she said in the same sort of tone pilgrims used upon seeing holy relics.

Kylo grinned then, a big, shit-eating grin that highlighted his charmingly crooked teeth and positively reeked of masculine satisfaction. “Told you,” he said smugly, sitting back against the blankets to remove the garments entirely. Then he crawled over her, lowering his mouth to her nipple while one hand inserted itself between her thighs.
Rey groaned and twined her fingers in his luscious hair, which still managed to look freaking gorgeous even though he hadn’t showered in days. She held him to her, tightening her grip on the roots when he slid one thick finger inside her and began slowly pumping it in and out.

“You feel so good, baby,” he murmured, switching to her other breast. A second finger joined the first, and when he crooked them to strike that sensitive spot on her inner wall, Rey arched her back and cried out.

Kylo hurriedly scooted down until he was crouched between her thighs, somehow managing to make the most of the tiny amount of space the tent provided. He tugged her legs over his shoulders and slid his hands under her bottom. Rey gasped as he lifted her off the blankets, bringing her to his mouth and lapping at her like she was some fine delicacy.

“Kylo, oh God…” She trailed off, gripping the blankets on either side of her head to anchor herself. She would have bucked up against his mouth, but with her hips propped up by his hands, he was fully in control of the situation. He ate her out with purpose, focusing his attentions on her clitoris for the most part, although his tongue swirled and dragged over the rest of her pussy frequently, as if he couldn’t help but taste every last bit of her.

Tension coiled in her belly, and Rey whimpered, thrashing her head. “Please,” she begged, wanting this release so badly her entire body was trembling.

“I’ve got you, sweetheart,” he said, applying firm, rhythmic suction to her clit, and it was everything Rey needed. She moaned and thrashed, and Kylo gripped her ass tighter, clutching her against his face as he continued the relentless assault. She was lost to him, helplessly pinned between his hands and his mouth, and it was the realization of his control over her that finally pushed the tightening sensation past the breaking point.

Rey unraveled with a shout, jerking against his face as her pussy pulsed again and again. His tongue laved her throughout, guiding her through the last shudders of her orgasm.

When he finally lowered her hips back to the ground, Rey arched her back, stretching out all the muscles that had just tensed under his onslaught. “Wow,” she said as Kylo prowled back up over her. “That was amazing.”

He dipped down to press a hard kiss against her mouth, and Rey could taste herself on his lips. “Also amazing for me. I love making you fall apart, Rey.”

He made as if to settle between her legs, but Rey held him off with a hand pressed to his chest. “Not yet. I want to taste you.”

Kylo’s pupils were already wide, but her words made his eyes darken even further. He shivered, then lay on his back beside her. “If my lady insists…”

She bit back a giggle at the overblown title. “She does.”

Finally, finally, it was her chance to put her hands and mouth all over that beautiful cock. Rey straddled one of his thighs, rubbing her pussy lightly against the thick muscle there as she contemplated her angle of attack.

Hands first. She reached out and gripped him in one fist, delighted when her fingers didn’t quite meet. Truly, this was the Platonic ideal of penises. A slow stroke up and down had him sighing, but Rey could do better than that. She lowered her head over him, breathing on the tip for long moments before swirling her tongue around it.
Kylo made a choking sound, and when she glanced up to see how he was doing, she saw that he was gripping the blankets the same way she had—like he was holding on for dear life. She smiled and sucked the head between her lips, releasing it with an obscene pop. “Are you sure you want this?”

He blinked down at her. “What? Of course I want this.”

She shrugged and licked slowly from base to tip. “I don’t want to intimidate you with my prowess or anything…”

He huffed a laugh at her callback to how he’d bragged about his dick. “You’re talking a big game, sweetheart.”

She wrapped her lips around him and sank down in one long, smooth motion, relaxing her throat when he bumped against the back of it. Kylo let out a strangled moan, and Rey would have grinned in victory if she wasn’t stuffed so full of his cock.

Truthfully, she hadn’t done this all that often, but she’d always loved it. There was something so empowering about having a man at her mercy. When it was a man as big and strong as Kylo, the thrill was damn near electric.

She lifted up on a slow drag, swirling her tongue at the top, then paused to give him a cheeky smirk. “So? Still think I’m talking a big game?”

He groaned and tangled his hands in her hair, guiding her back down. “Fuck, just please keep going.”

Rey did, taking him slow and deep, letting her spit collect and trail over him for even more lubrication. He nudged against the back of her throat with every stroke, and Rey found she liked the almost-painful feeling. It was a reminder of his solidity and size, yet another marker that this was a man she was with. Kylo was big and confident, with the kind of muscled intensity that made her feminine instincts scream dangerous and delicious. He wasn’t dangerous, of course, but right now, with him writhing and grunting beneath her, Rey felt like she had tamed something wild. In the animal kingdom, he would be the apex predator, and she the smaller creature clever and bold enough to make him her mate.

Thinking about the animal kingdom reminded her of something else, and she released him to let out a giggle.

“What is it?” he asked, tugging at the roots of her hair.

“I was just thinking about the porgs—”

“Oh my God, no,” he groaned. “That is not what a man wants to hear when the woman of his dreams is sucking his cock.”

Her heart skipped a beat at the words ‘woman of his dreams.’ Was she really that? It didn’t seem likely: Kylo was suave and sophisticated, worldly and ridiculously wealthy, whereas Rey was… odd, to say the least. “Not like that,” she said, putting the question of whether or not she was Kylo Ren’s dream girl aside for the moment. “I was just thinking that you did your own mating dance earlier.”

He looked down at her in confusion. “I did?” Then understanding broke over his face, and he grinned. “The waltz? I guess that does count.”
She smiled at him. “It does. And it was very effective.”

“Good to know. I guess—ah!” He broke off when she swallowed him back down, fisting her hand around the base of his cock to accompany her movements. “I guess there is something to be learned from nature.”

She hummed in agreement, which set off a fresh bout of gasps and swears from him, and then focused on pumping him with both hand and mouth. Soon he was nudging up into her, muttering obscene compliments under his breath.

“Enough,” he gasped at last, tugging her hair to pull her off him. “Fuck, Rey, I almost came.”

She wiped her mouth off and crawled up his body to press a hot kiss against his lips. “How terrible,” she said. “Truly, I’m a monster.”

“Yes, you are.” He punctuated the words with a swat to her rump, grinning at her when she giggled. Then his face sobered, and he looked up at her earnestly. “I really want to make love to you, Rey.”

The way he said that made her body hum and her chest tighten. “I want that, too,” she whispered, feeling like she was agreeing to something more than just sex. The air was heavy with potential, like the stars and the waves and the earth itself had paused in their endless movements to see what came next.

Kylo didn’t break eye contact as he fumbled to the side, grabbing his day bag and dragging it closer. He fished out a condom, and he did have to look down as he rolled it on, but Rey just kept staring at his handsome face. He was such a fascinating, contradictory man. A jaded playboy who had spent entire days kneeling at her side inside a wildlife blind. A cynic who had danced with her in the moonlight.

His hands returned to her hips, and he guided her over him. “Are you ready?” he asked, looking up at her with warm brown eyes.

She nodded and leaned down to kiss him. “So ready, Kylo.”

She helped position him in place, and then she sank down on top of him. It was slow and inevitable, a penetration that felt more like possession. He was thick, long, and stunningly hard, and Rey gasped as she took him fully inside.

“Rey.” He breathed her name like a prayer, squeezing his eyes shut. “You feel amazing.”

“You do, too,” she murmured. She clenched her inner muscles around him, and he made a noise almost like a whimper. She bit back her smile as she rose and sank back down, setting a rhythm as regular as the pounding surf below.

Nothing had ever felt this good before. Rey closed her eyes to better absorb the sensations, marveling at how tightly he stretched her, how deep he filled her. He took up all available space in her body, pushing to her limits without ever passing them. It was as if he’d been made for her.

He squeezed her hips tighter, his fingers sinking into her flesh. “You’re so beautiful, Rey, you don’t even know. I’ve never met anyone like you before.”

She opened her eyes and found him gazing at her with blatant adoration, and that look was something she’d definitely never seen before. She returned it, wanting to worship this incredible man however she could. “I’ve never met anyone like you before, either.”
After that, it was a symphony of gasps and grunts as Rey rode him. Lifting up was sweet agony, and sliding back down was devastating ecstasy. She needed all of it, both the emptiness and the fullness. It was a conversation expressed in the arcs of their bodies: Kylo asked, and she answered.

“God, sweetheart.” Kylo gripped her hips, guiding her rhythm into something more purposeful. “This is—you are—”

“What?” She snapped her hips down harder, wanting to make him come undone.

“You’re devastating.”

It was an unusual compliment for the bedroom, but Rey seized it hungrily. Devastating was the kind of word usually reserved for natural disasters, and she liked the idea of demolishing Kylo. She could strip him down and then build him back up, and with his old life cast aside, he might actually be hers…

It was a foolish, hopeless dream, but Rey indulged it anyway. Kylo wearing hiking clothes. Kylo camping because he wanted to, not just because he’d been forced to. Kylo sharing his secret passions with her because she was the only person in the world who understood him.

These imaginings were vain and stupid and bound to lead to heartbreak, but Rey couldn’t have resisted them if she’d tried. Kylo had crashed into her life—quite literally—and now nothing was the same.

She braced one hand on his shoulder and curled the other loosely around his throat, wanting at least that small claim on him. Kylo shuddered and bucked up into her; apparently he liked it, too.

“You’re mine,” she told him. “You always have been.”

He nodded, staring up at her like she was a goddess delivering a divine edict. “I am. Yours and yours alone.”

Rey knew better than to assume words spoken during sex were genuine, but these hit her in the heart, anyway. She’d never had a person who was hers before.

“I want you to come,” she told him, moving her hips more forcefully.

He smiled up at her, revealing a flash of white teeth and a disarmingly adorable crinkling at the edges of his eyes. “Ladies first.”

Rey was all too willing to go along with that. She leaned back a bit, bracing her hands on Ben’s thighs as she worked her hips over him. The position limited her range of motion, but from this angle, she could see him penetrating her, and for a few blissful moments, she and Kylo just stared as his reddened cock disappeared inside her wet entrance. Then Kylo started rubbing her exposed clitoris with firm fingers, and Rey arched further and moaned, giving herself over to him entirely. He was driving her up and up and up, his cock pistoning inside her, his free hand pinching her breast.

“Show me how that pretty pussy comes,” he said, picking up the pace of both his fingers and his thrusts. “Give me everything.”

He could have anything he wanted.

Rey jerked and shuddered, the orgasm ripping through her like a storm. She tipped her head back and screamed as she convulsed, her body rippling around him in hot, devastating waves.
Kylo swore and jerked up against her a few more times, and then he made a strangled sound and stiffened. Rey loved the way his face contorted in pleasure, how his mouth dropped open while his furrowed brow tugged at the edges of the healing cut.

When both of them were spent, Rey collapsed over him, bracing a hand on one side of his head. “Holy shit,” she said.

He nodded, looking dazed. “Holy shit, indeed.”

They lay tangled together for a few moments, catching their breaths. Rey beamed down at him, feeling more sexually satisfied than she ever had before. “Kylo Ren, you are a prodigy.”

He laughed and peppered her face with kisses. “Everyone needs a talent.”

She sighed and rested her head on his chest, listening to the steady thump of his heart. She knew he was joking, but given his background and his intense reaction to the recitation of Ben Solo’s flaws, his words made her wonder…

“You have other talents, you know,” she said.

He snorted. “Sorry, I forgot the waltzing.”

Her suspicion crystallized into certainty. For whatever reason, this wonderful man doubted himself. He covered it in cynicism and humor, but Kylo Ren was uncomfortable receiving praise. “You’re a great listener,” she said, rubbing her nose against his chest. “Very patient. Intelligent.” She pressed a kiss to his sternum. “Witty and interesting and passionate—”

“Okay, okay,” he said, rolling her over onto her back and propping himself up above her. He kissed her deeply, then started nibbling down her neck. “And you’re clever and resourceful and fascinating, and I’m the luckiest man in the world to get to kiss you.” He surged up again, kissing her with open-mouthed adoration, and Rey gave in to the distraction, knowing it would take time for him to recognize his own worth. She struggled with the same issues, after all, which was why she could recognize the hidden insecurities beneath his confident shell.

She wrapped her arms around him and met his lips for long minutes. When they broke apart at last, she sighed, feeling simultaneously exhausted and aroused. “I wish tonight didn’t have to end.”

“Me, too.” He rested his forehead against hers. “It’s still early, though. Let’s make the most of it.”

Rey nodded, pulling him into a sweeter kiss than any they’d shared this evening. The morning and all its attendant questions would come eventually, but for now, she had Kylo in her arms, and that was enough.

#

Packing the next morning was a solemn affair.

There wasn’t that much to do, since Rey tended to bring only exactly what she needed on these trips. Part of it was paranoia stemming from her upbringing in difficult foster homes—the fewer things she possessed, the less there was for someone to steal—and part of it was habit borne from a lifetime of poverty. Anything that wasn’t strictly necessary for survival was an indulgence, and while she’d unbent enough to allow herself books and the occasional candy bar on her research trips, everything else she brought was essential.

Kylo didn’t have to help her pack up, since all he possessed was a single day bag, but he’d insisted.
Despite swearing he hadn’t camped since childhood, he'd figured out how to dismantle her tent in record time, and his muscled arms were very helpful when the time came to carry Rey’s baggage to the landing strip.

When everything was in place, Rey turned to sweep one last look over the steep slopes of the island. “I’ll miss it here,” she said. An unspoken confession lurked beneath: I'll miss you.

Kylo stepped up behind her, wrapping his arms around her waist and resting his chin on her head. “Strangely enough, I’ll miss it, too.” He sighed. “Rey, these last few days have been amazing. My life lately… Well, I’m not proud of it.”

She nodded, understanding the outline of it, if not the specifics. He’d been hurt when she’d relayed Han’s condemnation about his own aimless millionaire son: He has all this money and potential and doesn’t know what to do with it, so he just drinks and fights and sleeps his way through Manhattan. Kylo had admitted that the description fit him as well.

She heard the distant drone of a helicopter approaching, but she didn’t dare move, not wanting to break this delicate moment before Kylo finished saying whatever he was about to.

“With you, it’s like I get to see this whole other way of being,” he continued. “You’re so… bright, Rey. Like sunshine. It’s what I thought when I heard your name, and the way you make everything light up… I had no idea I could have fun sitting in a tent staring at birds for hours, but you’re so passionate about it that you draw other people in. You drew me in.”

She tried to turn to face him, but he tightened his arms and kept her where she was, her back pressed against his front.

“And I want…”

The sound of the helicopter grew louder, rhythmic beats over the roar of the engine. Soon it would be too loud to hear him without shouting. “You want what?” she asked, heart in her throat.

“I want more,” he murmured in her ear. “I don’t know what that looks like, but I want more.”

She grinned so wide it hurt, then wriggled in his hold until finally he relented and let her turn around. She clasped her hands around his neck, then pushed up on her toes and kissed him. “I want more, too,” she said when she finally pulled away.

His eyes widened, shining with hope, but there was something off about his smile. A distressed edge to it that made Rey uneasy. He took a deep breath. “Rey, I need to tell you something. I haven’t been entirely honest—”

The helicopter was a roar now, and the buffeting wind of its landing whipped their clothes around them. It was too loud to hear anymore, and in a second, Poe would disembark, and the opportunity for privacy would be lost. Rey’s stomach twisted with anxiety. What hadn’t he told her? Did he have a girlfriend? God forbid, was he married?

The blades stilled, and Rey heard the door open. She stepped away from Kylo, looking towards Poe…

But it wasn’t Poe approaching them with long, furious strides. It was Han Solo, scowling like he was about to punch something. She stepped forward to greet him, but his attention was fixated entirely on the man at her side. “You,” Han growled, lifting a finger to point dramatically at Kylo’s chest.

Kylo winced, then looked at Rey with an expression that mixed apology, despair, and desperation.
She stared back, unable to move or speak without knowing what horrible secret he’d hidden from her—or why her mentor and friend looked ready to murder Kylo.

Kylo squeezed his eyes shut, then nodded once and turned his attention back to Han Solo.

“Hi, Dad.”

Chapter End Notes

Eeeek what's going to happen?? Speculation is encouraged!

Thanks for reading! I hope you liked this chapter. Let me know what you think in the comments!
Ideally, a mating dance results in a lifetime bond, but not always. Sometimes porgs are faced with natural disasters or complicated flock politics that can part the lovers permanently.
For one moment, Kylo had held the future in his arms. Rey, shining and gorgeous. Rey, intelligent and compassionate. He’d been ready to tell her how much he wanted to have a relationship with her, even if the logistics would be complicated, but she’d needed to know the truth about him first. She’d needed to know that his birth name was Ben Solo and that his plans for Ahch-To had been… less than admirable before he’d met her.

But the choice had been taken away from him when the helicopter had landed, piloted by a handsome, dark-haired man, and the passenger door had opened to reveal Kylo’s father. Given the rage on Han Solo’s face, the older man knew exactly what Kylo’s plans for the island had been.

“You son of a bitch,” Han said, stopping a few feet away from Kylo.

Kylo's eyebrows launched to his hairline. “Son of a bitch? Seriously?”

Han waved a dismissive hand. “It’s nothing I haven’t said to her face.”

“Han?” Rey’s voice trembled as she cautiously stepped forward. “What… what’s going on?”

Han looked at Rey. “I’m sorry, girl. I didn’t know what he’d done when I sent him here.” He scowled. “If I’d known he would do it, he never would have gotten near Ahch-To.”

“I don’t understand.” Rey looked between them, confusion stamped across her face. “What has he done? And Kylo… why did you call him ‘Dad’?”

Kylo exhaled heavily and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Because Han is my father. My name used to be Ben Solo.”

She gaped at him. “You’re Ben Solo? Why didn’t you tell me?”

Han laughed, but it wasn’t a kind sound. “Oh, great. So you lied to her, too? What did you tell her?”

“The truth—that my name is Kylo Ren. My plane’s landing gear didn’t deploy, so I was stuck here—”

“Did you tell her you own the entire fucking island?”

Rey gasped. “You own it? You told me you were a tourist.”

Kylo had held a better future in his arms only minutes before, and now it was all falling apart, his dreams of acceptance and redemption buried beneath the weight of his lies. Lies that had seemed unimportant at the time, but now painted him in damning shades.

“Did he tell you he’s selling it to Snoke Oil so they can drill here?” Han asked caustically.

Rey recoiled, and Kylo watched in horror as tears filled her eyes. “You’re selling the island? But the porgs…”

“It isn’t a done deal.” Kylo stepped towards her with an outstretched hand, driven by the urge to comfort her, and his heart cracked a little more when she shook her head and backed away.

“You knew,” she said through the flood of tears. “When we were intimate, you knew the whole time that you were going to sell this island to an evil corporation, that you were going to let the wildlife die—”

“When you were what?” Han interjected, looking between Rey and Kylo. Pure fury crossed his face, and he advanced on Kylo. “I can’t believe you took advantage of an innocent woman.”
Kylo anticipated the punch before Han flung it. He knew his father: while few things tipped Han over into violence, seeing women he cared about hurt sent him straight into a mindless rage. They were similar in that way; it was how Kylo had reacted when Han had told him about the divorce. Kylo blocked the blow instinctively, and when he heard Rey cry out in protest, he backed away rather than engage in the fight.

“I haven’t sold the island,” Kylo said. “Not yet.”

The words just made Rey sob harder. Han stopped in his pursuit and cast a withering glare at his son. “I gave you this island hoping it would be the making of you—that you would finally thrive with something to look after. I thought you’d meet Rey and learn about her research, and it would finally shake you out of your selfish path of self-destruction.” He shook his head. “I should have known better. You don’t know how to do anything but hurt people, do you?”

The words cut deep, flaying Kylo to the bone, because they were true. All he’d done for years was take. He’d taken sex and money and power like they were his due. He’d seized what he wanted and discarded anything that made him vulnerable.

He’d left his own family behind to start a new life, and although his isolated childhood had hurt, he knew his estrangement from his parents had hurt them even more. Leaving had become a habit, though. The closer people got to you, the better they were able to hurt you.

Now he was the one dealing that hurt. He’d never wanted to harm Rey, but he’d done it, anyway, because he was a selfish monster who didn’t know how to do anything else.

Rey collapsed to her knees, burying her face in her hands. “Please don’t do it, Kylo,” she begged through tear-stained fingers. “It’ll kill the porgs. Please don’t do it.”

“Rey—” He stepped towards her, fumbling for the words to tell her that these last few days had been transformative for him. He wouldn’t do it, not anymore—he just needed time to think—

Han stopped him with a hard stare, then bent down to heft one of the boxes of supplies. “Let’s go, Rey. There’s no point talking to him anymore.”

Kylo gaped at him as Han carried the box to the helicopter. The pilot had been watching the confrontation; he cast Kylo a damning look as he, too, retrieved a box. “You’re leaving me here?” Kylo asked.

“I’ll send a mechanic back from the mainland,” Han shot over his shoulder. “But you’re not going anywhere with Rey.”

A wave of panic washed over him. “Rey.” He turned to her. “Please look at me.”

She shook her head and scurried towards her bundled-up tent.

“Please, sweetheart. I’m not going to do it…”

“I don’t want to talk about it right now.” Her voice was watery and hoarse. “I can’t talk about it right now.” She finally glared at him as she hefted the tent over her shoulder. “And don’t call me sweetheart, Ben Solo. You aren’t who I thought you were.”

Kylo watched with tear-blurred eyes as the helicopter lifted off the ground, taking his heart and his future away with it.
His apartment was terrible.

Kylo didn’t know how he’d never noticed that fact before. It was so… stark. Black and white and minimalist, the monotony only broken up by hard chrome accents. The furniture wasn’t comfortable. The heavy curtains blocked out the view of Manhattan he’d paid millions of dollars for.

Strange that over the course of only a few days, a tiny orange tent had become the closest thing he’d ever had to a home.

He groaned and pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes. He’d been back for almost a week, and in that time, all he’d done was brood and drink. His head ached, and he smelled horrendous. He still hadn’t showered since leaving Ahch-To, which was completely disgusting, but he couldn’t find it in himself to care. If he washed the dirt of the island off—if he washed her off—it was just another step away from the one time he’d been truly happy.

He hadn’t heard from Rey, not that he even knew how she’d go about contacting him. She didn’t have his phone number or his email address—because he hadn’t even told her who he really was. Like a fool, he’d liked that she didn’t know his family baggage. He hadn’t wanted Han’s recollections of him to taint her perception of him. He hadn’t wanted her to pretend to like him because she thought she had to convince him not to sell her precious island.

He’d just wanted her to like him. Not Kylo Ren, not Ben Solo, but him. The person without the trappings of wealth and power.

And by failing to tell her the truth, he’d fucked everything up.

His phone buzzed, and Kylo rolled his head over to glare at it. He was lying on the cold hardwood of his living room floor, a half-empty bottle of whiskey clamped to his chest. The caller ID shone bright in the darkened room: Armitage Hux.

“Of course,” Kylo muttered, ignoring the continuing buzzing. Hux was one of his regular drinking buddies, and it was Friday night. He probably wanted to hit the clubs and find a woman to take home.

Kylo had had enough of clubs and women, although apparently not enough of drinking to dull the awfulness of his life. He took another swig of the whiskey, wondering what Rey was doing right now. Probably going over footage of the porgs or writing the next chapter of her dissertation.

The phone fell silent, then buzzed again insistently. “Fuck off,” Kylo told it, wondering if there was a way to program the phone to accept voice commands so he wouldn’t have to move from this spot ever again. He was going to become one with the floor. In a thousand years, some intrepid scientist could find his bones and speculate as to what had happened to him.

An intrepid scientist like Rey.

Two tears trailed down Kylo’s cheeks, and he gave in to the maudlin impulse to say her name out loud. “Rey, I’m so sorry.”

Silence fell, and then the phone lit up again.

Kylo grabbed it and mashed the screen almost hard enough to crack it. “What?” he shouted.

There was a long pause. “Uh, everything all right there, Ren?” Hux’s crisp British tones filtered through the speaker.
“What do you want, Hux?” As the name left his tongue, Kylo considered how ridiculous it was that they called each other by their last names, like pompous boarding school assholes. Hux was a pompous boarding school asshole, but Kylo had no such excuse. He just had the fucking stupid name he’d chosen for himself one drunken night post-college.

“I asked the concierge, and he says you haven’t left the building in a week. What’s going on?”

“I don’t want to go anywhere,” Kylo slurred, dropping his head to the floor. He put the phone on speaker so he could talk to Hux without having to hold the device upright.

“Right.” Hux sighed. “Well, you’ve clearly been drinking already, and you might as well drink with other people, rather than being a miserable prat. Get dressed and come downstairs—Gwen and I are waiting outside.”

He groaned. Of course the persistent ass would show up on Kylo’s doorstep. Gwen—Phasma, as she went by in the modeling world, another stupid name chosen when they’d been drunk—was Hux’s on-again, off-again model girlfriend, and she was nice enough, but Kylo didn’t want to see either of them. “No.”

“Suit yourself,” Hux said. “I bribed the concierge, so we’re coming up to get you.”

“No, no, no!” Kylo’s protest fell on deaf ears, since Hux had hung up on him. He thunked his head against the floor. “Oh, Christ.”

Since Kylo had the penthouse, the elevator opened directly into his suite of rooms. The suite of rooms that were currently dark and filthy, reeking of booze and Kylo’s no doubt unappetizing musk. He pushed himself upright, wobbling a little as he staggered towards the foyer. When was the last time he’d eaten?

The elevator dinged open, and Hux and Gwen stepped out, the two Brits dressed in their finest. Red-headed Hux wore a gunmetal gray suit, and icy-blond Gwen looked like she’d been poured into a sequined silver mini-dress that barely covered her ass. “My God,” Hux exclaimed, waving his hand in front of his face. “What is that smell?”

“Shut up,” Kylo grumbled, leaning heavily against the wall.

“Seriously, it smells like something died in here—”

“Kylo,” Gwen interjected, striding towards him on stilettos that made her tower over both of the men, “what is going on with you? Why is there dried mud on your pajamas?”

“Christ, I hope that’s mud,” Hux muttered.

Kylo’s cheeks heated. “I haven’t changed since leaving Ireland.”

“And your time in Ireland involved rolling around in the mud in your pajamas?”

It had, and at the reminder of how he’d rolled around with Rey, Kylo’s eyes welled with tears. He sniffed, trying to restrain them manfully, but it was no use.

Hux recoiled at the sight of jaded playboy Kylo Ren crying. “This is extremely disturbing, Ren—”

“Hux.” Gwen glared at the redhead. “You’re not helping.” She returned her attention to Kylo, straightening her shoulders and nodding with the determination of a general about to undertake a military campaign. “Right. When’s the last time you ate something?”
Kylo squinted, trying to recall. “I had a protein bar last night.”

“I’m ordering pizza. You.” She pointed sternly at Kylo. “Take a shower and change out of those awful pajamas.”

It was the logical choice, even though all he wanted to do was curl up in a dirty little ball in the corner and weep, so Kylo nodded and staggered off to his bedroom.

Twenty minutes later, he felt a lot better. The hot water had soothed his headache, and his skin no longer itched now that he was scrubbed and clad in clean pajamas. When he returned to the living room, he saw that Gwen had tidied a little, dismantling the nest of blankets he’d slept in the previous night and clearing out empty bottles of booze. A pizza sat on the kitchen counter, and Kylo had never smelled anything so good in his life. He descended on it like a ravenous animal, devouring three whole slices before he paused to look up at Hux and Gwen.

“All right,” Hux said, pulling out a stool next to Kylo at the kitchen island. “Let’s hear it.”

He rubbed his eyes, hoping desperately he didn’t cry this time. “I met someone.”

“In Ireland?” Hux considered him quizzically. “You were only there for a few days.”

“I crashed my plane on a deserted island, except it wasn’t deserted, after all. There was this researcher there, and she was just…” Kylo sighed, remembering Rey’s freckles and shining eyes, the way she stood up to him, the charming way she geeked out about porgs. “She was perfect.”

“You crashed your plane?”

Kylo waved a dismissive hand. “It was a rental. Doesn’t matter.” Some poor technician was probably still on Ahch-To, tinkering with it, but Kylo didn’t feel too bad about that, considering how much money he’d thrown at the problem to make it go away so he could retreat to New York and lick his wounds.

“So you met a woman on a deserted island,” Gwen repeated slowly. “And she was researching… what?”

His lips tipped up fondly. “Porg mating dances.”

Two pairs of blue eyes stared at him with the same perplexed expression. “What?” they said in unison.

“There’s this bird, the porg. Highly endangered. She’s writing her dissertation on them, and she was trying to get evidence of their mating habits.”

Hux’s eyes suddenly went wide. “Oh, shit,” he said. “This is that deserted island your dad gave you, isn’t it?”

Kylo winced. “Yeah.”

“The one you’re going to sell to Snoke.”

“…Yeah.”

“Does she know?”

Kylo took a deep breath. “Well, she does now, but only because my dad showed up. But our… the time we spent together… well, I didn’t tell her who I was. Or what I was going to do with the
“Kylo!” Two voices admonished him simultaneously.

“You mean to tell me,” Gwen said, “that you started a relationship with some eccentric bird researcher but neglected to tell her that you planned to sell her very endangered birds to an oil company?”

He cringed. “Basically.”

Silence fell at that, so Kylo distracted himself with a fourth slice of pizza.

“Well,” Hux said at last. “That’s a shame, but you’ll meet someone else. Plenty of fish in the sea. Or birds in the air or… whatever.”

“Once again, not helpful, Hux.” Gwen studied Kylo. “So you really like her.”

He nodded.

“And you haven’t sold the island yet, have you?”

He shook his head.

“Then what, exactly, is the issue? Tell her you’re a daft idiot and that you have no intentions of selling the island. Buy her a nice present to earn her forgiveness. Problem sorted.”

Kylo’s jaw worked. “It’s not that simple. She’s friends with my dad, and he said some pretty bad stuff about me before she knew who I was… and after, for that matter…”

“Oh, bollocks.” Gwen waved the complaint off. “She's not trying to date your dad. At least give the woman a chance to forgive you.”

He bit his lip, considering whether or not it was even possible for Rey to forgive him. He’d lied about being Ben Solo, about owning the island, and about his intentions to sell it to Snoke. But he hadn’t lied about being Kylo Ren, and he wasn’t going to sell it to Snoke, not anymore…

He checked his phone’s notifications for the first time in a week and saw no fewer than thirty emails, texts, and phone calls from Snoke, and it occurred to him that no one, not even Snoke himself, knew the deal was off.

“What if she can’t forgive me?” he asked quietly.

“Is she worth making the attempt?”

“She’s worth anything.”

Gwen shrugged. “Then there’s your answer.”

#

They didn’t go out that night, but it was the best time Kylo could remember ever having with Hux and Gwen. Hux was still a dick, and Gwen quickly returned to her routine of snarky insults, but both of them displayed more sensitivity and thoughtfulness than Kylo had ever expected them to be capable of.

Kylo hadn’t thought himself capable of sensitivity until recently, either. Maybe he hadn’t given his
friends—or himself—enough credit. Maybe his life was vapid, pointless, and selfish because he’d deliberately made it so.

It had been easy not to feel pain or insecurity when he’d had no expectations to live up to.

Once the pizza was demolished, Kylo took the first step on his road to seeking Rey’s forgiveness. He dialed Snoke, knowing that even though it was late, the CEO would take the call. The oil reserves under Ahch-To were extensive, and the man’s desperation to make the deal was apparent.

“Kylo Ren.” Snoke sneering voice came over the speaker. “At last, you deign to answer my calls. I thought we had a deal.”

“We don’t,” Kylo said bluntly. “And we’re not going to. Ever. The island’s not for sale.”

He hung up, then blocked Snoke’s number.

The second step was much harder, and he waited until Hux and Gwen were gone to take it. One A.M. in New York was 6 A.M. in Cork, and Kylo knew his father preferred early starts.

The phone rang for an inordinately long time, and Kylo’s stomach sank as he considered the possibility that his father would never speak to him again. They hadn’t spoken much since the divorce, but still… at least the possibility of reconciliation had been out there, even if Kylo hadn’t wanted to pursue it just yet.

Finally, the ringing stopped. “Hello?” a grizzled voice growled.

“Dad.”

Long minutes of silence passed, and then Han sighed. “What do you want, Ben?”

“I fucked up. Really fucked up.”

“Yeah, you did, but I’d be interested to hear which part of it you thought was a mistake.”

Kylo sank onto his couch, staring blindly up at the ceiling as he considered his multitude of sins. “I shouldn’t have lied to Rey about who I was. Or omitted who I was, I guess.”

“Why did you?”

The confession was hard to force out. “Because I wanted her to like me for who I am—not because I’m your son or own the island. Not because of my family or my money or whatever.”

Han paused for a while, considering. “That’s a better reason than I thought you’d have.”

Kylo huffed. “Yeah, well, it was still stupid.”

“So that’s what you think was a mistake? Lying to Rey?”

Kylo knew what his father wanted to hear. Luckily, it coincided with what he wanted to say. “I shouldn’t have even thought about selling the island, and especially not to Snoke. It’s just… I’ve been trying to separate myself from anything related to the family for so long. I thought I could take this thing you loved and…” He trailed off, realizing how terrible the sentiment would sound.

“And what?” Han prompted.

“And ruin it,” Kylo admitted softly. “I wanted to ruin it. To waltz away with a pile of money having
proven myself just as awful as you and mom have always thought I am.”

The silence that followed that confession was heavy, and it stretched on and on, until Kylo was fidgeting in his seat. He wasn’t going to break it, though. He’d said the damning words out loud; it was up to Han to receive them.

“That’s pretty fucked up,” Han said at last.

Kylo laughed a little. “Yeah. Yeah, it is.”

“I understand it, though. A little.”

“You do?” Kylo squeezed the phone tighter, suddenly desperate to hear his father’s next words.

“Leia… Your mom always thought I was too coarse, too crass for the circles she moved in. She’d chew me out for every little slip from proper etiquette, and I took it for a while, wanting to be the perfect man she needed, but at some point I realized I was never going to be perfect. So I started deliberately breaking those little rules, just to prove to myself—and to her—that I was never going to change. That I was never going to rise above her expectations. I chewed with my mouth open, or asked her dinner guests about religion, or used the wrong fork.”

“I bet she didn’t like that.” Now that Kylo thought about it, he could remember a few screaming fights after dinner parties. He’d always hid in his room during their rows, terrified of the conflict.

“She hated it. She knew I was doing it deliberately, too, and she asked me why, but I couldn’t tell her. I didn’t totally get it myself. I just knew that if I was always going to disappoint her, I might as well embrace it. Use it like armor or something.”

Kylo’s eyes burned with unshed tears. “Yeah,” he said. “Something like that.”

They settled into another period of silence, but this one felt more comfortable. “Are you going to sell to Snoke?” Han asked at last.

“No. Meeting Rey… She’s amazing. I care about her so much, and after she showed me the porgs and told me about her research, there was no way I could have done it. I didn’t officially cancel negotiations until today, though.”

Han expelled a relieved breath. “I’m glad you canceled the deal. Thank you. Why wait a whole week, though?”

“Um. Well.”

“Let me guess,” his father said dryly. “Brooding and drinking?”

“Something like that.”

“Oh huh. I know that one, too.”

“I really care about her, dad,” Kylo said abruptly, needing his father to understand. “It was only a few days, but it was real. I want to be with her. It’s scary how much I want it.”

“Yeah, well, she’s pretty pissed about the whole ‘selling the porgs to Big Oil’ thing. And the lying.”

A surge of guilt made Kylo squirm. “I’m going to try to make it up to her. I’ll need your help, though.”
“That’s a first.” Han sounded surprised. “I’m not sure I’m any good at coming up with ways to earn a woman’s forgiveness. I’m better at pissing them off. I think apologies are generally where you start, though.”

“I will apologize,” Kylo said, “but I have something else in mind, too. Because words are just empty promises, but an action will be proof I mean it.”

“All right,” Han said. “Then let’s talk actions. But first—”

“Yeah?”

Han cleared his throat. “You said you wanted to prove yourself to be as awful as your mom and I always thought you were.”

“Oh.” That. “Yeah.”

“We never thought you were awful. I mean, changing your name was a low blow, and the trajectory of your last few years has been a bit... disappointing, but we’re still your family. We still love you.”

The tears that had been building throughout this conversation spilled out, and Kylo made an embarrassing hiccuping sound. “But I was so moody and angry growing up.”

“Yes, welcome to the club.” Han sighed. “Your mom and I got too caught up in our own issues. We didn’t give you the attention you needed, and we weren’t as patient with you as we should have been. I’m sorry, Ben.”

He’d never in his wildest dreams expected to hear an apology from his father. Kylo gaped at nothing for a few moments, then cleared his tear-clogged throat. “I’m sorry, too. For changing my name and... and generally being a little shit.”

Han chuckled. “Well, at least we have nowhere to go but up from here. So—how about you let your old man start making it up to you by helping you get your girl back?”

Kylo smiled. “Yeah,” he said. “I’d like that.”

Chapter End Notes

Sigh.

Well, we all knew Kylo was making a terrible choice by not revealing his true identity to Rey. The (bird) shit has officially hit the fan.

What do you think he’ll do to win her back? Do you think he even can?

Let me know your thoughts in the comments! Thanks for reading.
Following a successful mating dance, the male porg will often procure gifts for his mate. If she finds them pleasing, the pair will form a lifelong bond.
Rey moved listlessly through the month following her time on Ahch-To. Even the video of the porg mating dance couldn’t cheer her, because every time she looked at that funny, hopping courtship, she was reminded of Kylo. Kylo waltzing with her in the moonlight. Kylo listening intently to her explanation of porg behavior. Kylo kneeling in a tiny blind for hours on end, keeping her company as she waited for the porgs to appear.

He’d been abrasive at first, sure, but once she’d gotten to know him… well, Rey had liked him. Really, really liked him. He was funny and charming, patient and insightful. His background and lifestyle might be wildly different from hers, but they shared a common thread of loneliness. He’d treated her like a desirable, fascinating woman, not a dirty, bird-obsessed oddity, and it had been intoxicating.

Then she’d found out it was all a lie.

Kylo hadn’t been on Ahch-To for tourism. As Han had told her on the flight back to the mainland, he had been scoping out the land in preparation for the sale to Snoke Oil.

“I’m sorry, Rey,” Han had said. “I told him to come visit. I thought he’d be interested in your research—that maybe getting out of New York and meeting someone new would shake him out of his self-destructive spiral. But my friend Lando has connections in Big Oil, and he heard about the sale. I’m so sorry. I flew here right away… but it was too late.”

Not too late to stop the land sale, which, as far as Rey knew, was still being negotiated. Too late to protect Rey’s heart.

She’d fallen for Kylo Ren shockingly fast. Unfortunately, recovering from him was taking far longer.

*Recovery* made him sound like a disease, which she supposed he was. Her chest ached when she thought of him. Her nights were restless, plagued by a mix of hot dreams and furious tears. He’d gotten into her heart and her head, and she couldn’t seem to get him out.

“Rey.” Her advisor, Professor Holdo, peered into Rey’s tiny office, her lavender-dyed hair swinging around her chin. “You have a visitor.”

“Oh.” Rey’s heart rate accelerated, even though there was no way it was Kylo. “Who is it?”

“Not sure—an older man.”

Definitely not Kylo, then. Her chest started hurting again, which was stupid. Ignoring her own pathetic disappointment, Rey saved her latest edits to the chapter of her dissertation that focused on mating practices, then pushed away from the desk. She grimaced as she looked down at herself. Her jeans were baggy, her green top wrinkled from being submerged in a pile of laundry she hadn’t gotten around to folding. Or washing, for that matter. She tugged at the shirt, then raked her fingers through her tousled hair. There wasn’t much she could do to appear more presentable, so whoever it was would have to take her as she was.

When she saw Han waiting in the main office of the Biology department, she felt a mix of joy and embarrassment. He was a good friend, but she had just had sex with his no-good oil stooge of a son, and that made things a little awkward.

He seemed to feel no discomfort, merely grinning at her and opening his arms wide for a hug. She went gladly, sighing against his chest as he squeezed her. Han gave very good hugs.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.
He stepped back and slipped his hands into his pockets. “I was in town for business and figured I’d finally get a peek at where you work.”

“Oh. Do you want a tour?” The lab wasn’t the most exciting place on Earth, and Rey’s portion of it had once been a supply closet, but maybe he would find it interesting.

He waved a hand dismissively. “Nah. The point is to see you, not the lab. Do you have a free afternoon?”

Rey bit her lip, considering. She ought to keep working on her dissertation, but she’d been making good progress. Besides, she hadn’t been anywhere other than her flat or the lab in the month since Ahch-To, too consumed by work and moping. “Sure,” she said. “Let me just tell my advisor.”

She shrugged on her battered leather jacket, then followed Han out into a gray, slightly drizzly day. She breathed in deeply, loving the scent of the rain as it splattered against the sidewalk. “Where do you want to grab lunch?”

Han grinned roguishly. “I have a surprise for you. Think you’re up for a short flight?”

That was unexpected—they’d never left the city before. Rey wondered what had prompted the last-minute excursion, then realized with a sinking feeling that he probably felt bad for her after the blow-up with Kylo. Rey hated being the recipient of other people’s pity. “I guess. You don’t have to try to make me feel better, though.”

“That’s not why I’m doing it,” Han said, hailing a taxi. “This is for me more than you, honestly. I need to get out of town.”

She refrained from pointing out that he’d only just got in to town, realizing that even if Han was motivated by pity, he wasn’t about to tell her. Besides, she really had missed him—she hadn’t seen him since that awful morning.

A while later, they were launching up into the gray sky in Han’s Cessna 182 Skylane. He must have flown in from Cork. The four-seater plane, which Han had named the Falcon, was his pride and joy.

They headed due west, and by the time they reached Galway, Rey was officially suspicious. “Are we going to Ahch-To?” she asked over the headset. She wasn’t sure she wanted to go back there just yet, although it was always nice to see the porgs.

“Yes,” Han said. “We’re going to have a picnic.”

That was… not what she had expected. “You flew all the way from Cork to Dublin only to fly me back out to Ahch-To for a picnic?” she asked incredulously.

He grinned. “So sue an old man for being sentimental about his friends. I have a surprise for you.”

Her chest warmed at the easy declaration of friendship, and she settled back into the seat. “Fine,” she said. “But if I see an oil rig off the coast, I’m going to lose it.”

“You won’t.”

She supposed it was too early for Snoke Oil to have set up their drilling operation. Even the thought of it made her feel sick.

They touched down on the grassy strip—thankfully with the landing gear extended—and rolled to a stop. Rey got out of the plane and stretched, and as she took in the brilliant green grass and jagged...
stone peaks of Ahch-To, she realized she was glad to be back. This island felt a little like home after all the months she’d spent here with the porgs.

She supposed Han and the porgs were as close to a real family as she’d ever had, which was pretty pathetic, but it was more than she’d had before starting grad school.

She frowned up the slope at a distant splotch of red and black that looked an awful lot like a person. “Is someone else here?”

Han shifted from foot to foot, rubbing the back of his neck as if he felt awkward. “Ah, about that…”

The figure drew nearer, and Rey’s heart soared at the same time as her stomach plummeted as she recognized a tall, muscular frame and wind-tousled black hair. “No,” she said, stepping back towards the plane. “Absolutely not.”

“Just give him a chance, Rey.” Han held his hands up placatingly. “I think you should hear what he has to say.”

“You traitor!” She couldn’t believe Han had lured her here under false pretenses. “Let’s have a picnic, he said,” she mocked in a sing-song voice. “It’ll be fun, he said.”

Kylo strode towards her like a man on a mission, his long legs eating up the ground until he stood close enough for her to count the moles that dotted his pale face. His eyes were shadowed, as if he hadn’t been sleeping well, but he was still devastatingly handsome. He wore battered jeans, rugged hiking boots, and a sinfully soft-looking plaid button-up.

His Adam’s apple bobbed. “Hi, Rey.”

She couldn’t stop staring at him. She crossed her arms defensively, as if that would protect her heart from falling victim to his spell again. “Hi, Ben.” She used his real name deliberately, knowing he would probably hate that.

“I’m thinking of changing my name back to Ben, actually,” he said, slipping his hands into his pockets. “There’s too much baggage associated with Kylo Ren.” He grimaced. “Too much baggage with Ben Solo, too, but I guess sometimes you just have to choose which baggage you prefer.”

“Why are you here?” Her throat was dry, her pulse pounding rapidly.

“I’m sorry, Rey.” He sank to his knees in front of her, grabbing her hands and looking up at her earnestly. She was too taken aback by the movement to yank her hands out of his. “I’m sorry I didn’t tell you I was Han’s son. I’m sorry I lied about why I was here. I’m sorry I tried to make that stupid fucking deal to begin with.” He shook his head. “Nothing I say can justify my actions, but I can try to explain. Selling the land… well, it seemed like a good way to cut ties with my past. I knew Han would be furious.”

“You're damn right,” Han said from where he stood beside the Cessna’s wing.

“I didn’t even think about it that hard—I just acted. And it was stupid.”

Rey’s hands trembled. “Are you still going to sell?”

He shook his head, looking up at her with fervent adoration. “I canceled the deal with Snoke. No one’s going to do anything to this land. The porgs will be safe.”

A tear slid down Rey’s cheek at the news. “Thank you,” she whispered.
He kissed the back of one hand, then the other. “I’m just sorry I made such a thoughtless choice to begin with.”

“It’s a Solo family tradition,” Han said dryly.

Kylo glared at his father. “Do you have to eavesdrop?”

“Oh, yes. The least you can do to make amends for the stunt you pulled with Snoke is let me watch you grovel.” He winked at Rey.

Kylo sighed heavily.

Rey licked her lips. “Why didn’t you tell me Han was your father?” It had been bothering her a lot over the last few weeks. She’d welcomed this man inside her body without even really knowing who he was.

Kylo pressed his forehead against her hands. His broad back expanded with a deep breath, and she wondered if he was hiding his face from her because he was embarrassed. “I like you, Rey,” he said. “I like you a lot. More than I’ve ever liked anyone.” Another of those slow, heavy breaths, as if he was willing himself to remain calm. “My entire life, I’ve been defined by my circumstances. Throughout childhood, I was Ben Solo, the awkward, moody heir to the Skywalker family legacy. When I took the name Kylo Ren, the legacy stuck around, only now everyone wanted to know the dirty details of my split with the family. I’m notorious, Rey. Newspapers feature me on their gossip pages. People are constantly seeking favors from me. I have almost no friends, and when women pursue me, it’s only for my money or my reputation. Never for me.”

Her heart ached for him. She’d never thought of money or power as a prison, but she couldn’t imagine what it would be like to be hounded by gossips and photographers. To meet new people and never know if they were interested in you just because of the status that came with you.

He looked up at her at last, his warm brown eyes pleading for her understanding. “And then I met this beautiful, intelligent ornithologist who had never heard my name before. And she knew I was rich, but she didn’t know about my reputation or my baggage. She just thought I was a cantankerous asshole who couldn’t land a plane.”

“You were pretty rude,” she said, her lips twitching at the memory of his tantrum when he’d emerged from the damaged plane.

“I was. And you called me out on it. Do you know how many people do that these days? None. That’s what money and notoriety get you—a blank check to behave as badly as you want with no consequences.”

“So you liked me because I stood up to you?”

He nodded and squeezed her hands. “Not just that, of course, but it was so refreshing to just be treated like a person. An asshole of a person, but still a person. You didn’t care about my wealth or my reputation, and I knew that if you found out I owned this island—if you knew I was related to Han—that perception of me would change. You wouldn’t get to know me outside of my past. And Rey… I really, really wanted you to know me. I still want it.” He lowered his gaze to the ground. “I wanted you to like me as much as I liked you.”

The confession made her heart sing and her eyes blur with tears. “Oh, Kylo,” she said, sinking to her knees to face him. “I still would have liked you if I’d known you were Han’s son.”

“But maybe you would have liked me because I was Han’s son, and I wanted to earn it on my own.”
She tugged on her hands until he reluctantly released them, then cupped his face. “You aren’t defined by your family, Kylo. How I feel about them doesn’t affect how I feel about you. You still would have had to earn my affection—and you would have.” She bit her lip. “At least until I learned about the deal with Snoke. But even then, if you’d told me you were having doubts, or if you’d talked about the choice with me, maybe I would have understood. We could have worked it out together.”

He closed his eyes, his jaw working under her hands. She noticed that his scar had healed into a thin pink line. His time on Ahch-To with her was written on his skin, and a horrible part of her liked seeing the proof that this had been real for him, too. That he’d been there with her, and the experience would always be with him.

“I’m an idiot,” he said bluntly. “An emotionally stunted, awkward asshole who has no idea how to talk to a woman I like, much less share my baggage with her.”

“And I’m an emotionally stunted charity case who relates better to birds than people,” Rey said. “I’m not perfect, either.”

The way he looked at her then told her he highly doubted that. “You’re everything good in this world, Rey. Considering my life and my history, I don’t know how you could possibly be interested in me. But if you are…” He trailed off. “Never mind. That was too forward. I’m just here to say I’m sorry. Maybe we can talk sometime? Get to know each other, even just as friends?”

In response, Rey leaned forward and pressed her lips against his. He let out a choked noise, and then his arms wrapped around her and he was kissing her back desperately. He tilted his head to get a better angle, then plunged his tongue into her mouth.

“Okay, eavesdropping over,” Han said. “Rey—I can stay if you want to go back today. If not, Ben’s camping here for a few days.”

Rey pulled back from the kiss. “Can I stay?” she whispered. “Please?”

Kylo groaned and hugged her tightly. “Nothing would make me happier. Please stay, Rey.”

She nodded and kissed him again, and they were so wrapped up in each other that they hardly noticed when the Cessna roared to life and rolled away. A few minutes later, they were alone on the island—except for the porgs, of course—and Rey felt like she could breathe deeply for the first time in a month. The tightness in her chest was gone, replaced by a feeling that was like an iridescent bubble expanding inside her. She was so happy she might float away.

“I have something to show you,” Kylo said, breaking away from her mouth before the kiss got too heated. “I didn’t want to show you before, because I didn’t want it to affect your decision.”

He helped her to her feet, then guided her to the end of the runway, where a low rectangle of stone had recently been erected. Rey gasped when she saw the words engraved on the front, then burst into tears.

*Welcome to Niima Nature Reserve*

Two dancing porgs had been carved below the message.

“How you like it?” Kylo asked hesitantly, as if her blubbering like a baby wasn’t proof enough. “The porgs will be protected now, and no one will ever be able to build here.”

Rey flung herself into his arms, wrapping her legs around him as he staggered back under the assault.
She sobbed against him, her tears slicking both their cheeks. “I love it,” she said, sinking her hands into his hair and holding him in place as she launched a campaign of kisses against his wonderful face. “Thank you so much.”

He laughed and kissed her back, then started walking up the slope, still carrying her. “You’re welcome. Now, if you’re interested… can I show you my tent?”

She nodded enthusiastically. “Show me your tent, Kylo… and then show me you.”

#

His tent was substantially larger than hers, with a king-sized air mattress and an assortment of bags and supplies that Rey would take a look at later. For now, all she wanted to look at was the incredible man currently unbuttoning his red plaid shirt as he knelt between her legs. “You look so good like this,” she said, trailing a hand over the soft fabric. “Like you were made to be outdoors.”

He grinned as he shrugged the shirt off, revealing that divinely muscled chest. “I have to admit, it’s much more comfortable than a suit.”

He’d already stripped her totally nude, complimenting her effusively as he ran his hands and lips over every inch of revealed skin. Rey was wet and tingling, ready for him to make her his, but she couldn’t deny that she was enjoying the show as he leisurely divested himself of all his garments. Finally, it was just them, skin on skin.

Kylo dipped his hand between her legs, slicking through her wet folds. “Gorgeous,” he praised, slipping two fingers deep inside her.

Rey moaned and bucked against him, wanting more pressure than just his fingers could provide. “Is there something you want?” Kylo asked, a wicked glint in his eye as he crooked his fingers inside her, massaging that hard-to-reach spot that made her mind explode into fireworks.

“You,” she said, reaching down to squeeze his rigid cock. “Just you.”

He kissed her, long and slow, then broke away to grab a condom. Within moments he was back on top of her, his hips cradled by her thighs, his erection nudging against the wet entrance to her body. “You have me,” he said as he pushed inside her. “Whatever you want from me, it’s yours.”

Rey moaned as he filled her to the brim, his thick cock pressing against her sensitive inner walls as she stretched to accommodate him. She wrapped her arms around his neck and brought him close for another kiss, and then he started moving, and she couldn’t focus on anything but the way he made her feel.

He made love to her with deep, rolling strokes, pulling almost all the way out before surging back in. It was a possession, primal and thorough, and Rey accepted his claim gladly. She lifted her hips against him, encouraging the motion.

“More,” she begged when the need inside her roared harder deeper faster. Kylo obliged, fucking into her harder, until the air mattress protested creakily and Rey feared they might actually pop it.

“I want to date you, Rey,” he said as he plundered her body, rearranging her universe with his words and his passion. “I want to move to Ireland, court you in person.”

“Court me?” she asked, grinning against his mouth. “How nineteenth century of you.”
He punished her with a brutal thrust that had her gasping and seeing stars. “I want to hear everything about you and tell you everything about me. I want to take you to dinner and bring you coffee in the mornings and fuck you every night until you’re screaming for me.”

Rey groaned. “That sounds… good…”

He picked up the pace even more. Their bodies were slapping together, little grunts and whimpers escaping from their throats, and as Kylo’s movements turned desperate, she knew he was close to orgasm. He slid a hand between them to rub her clit, and the extra sensation sent her spinning into a hurricane of pleasure that left her gasping and crying out as her body clamped around him. She shivered and clung to him, whimpering as the orgasm wrung her out utterly. Kylo followed with a curse, slamming his hips into her one last time before he shuddered with his own orgasm.

“Incredible,” he whispered against her temple as they caught their breaths. “God, Rey, you make me feel…”

She nodded against him. “I know. I feel it, too.”

They lay entangled for a long time after that, talking of the future and the possibilities before them. “What will you do for work in Ireland?” Rey asked, tracing a lazy pattern over Kylo’s skin.

“I don’t know. But I have enough money that I don’t need to worry about it right away… or ever, honestly.”

She laughed and rolled her eyes at that. “Kylo Ren, the world’s youngest retiree.”

“Ben Solo,” he corrected, “and I won’t be retiring anytime soon. I’m just going to explore my options. See what I’m good at, what I’m passionate about. Take some classes.”

She kissed his cheek. “That sounds great.”

“But I have a feeling I already know what my greatest passion is going to be.” He propped himself up on his elbow to look down at her, and Rey rejoiced at how happy and relaxed he seemed.

“Don’t tell me,” she said, widening her eyes dramatically. “You’re passionate about porgs, aren’t you?”

He laughed and plunged a hand down to tickle her ribs, and she squealed and shrieked, giggling uncontrollably as he took revenge for her teasing.

“It’s not porgs,” he said after he’d finally taken mercy on her, “although I’ve definitely learned a lot from their mating dance.”

“So what is it?” Rey asked, breathless with hope, chest filled to bursting with wonder.

He kissed her, long and slow. “You. Just you.”

Chapter End Notes
Thank you so much for reading! And thanks again to NewerConstellations for the fabulous prompt. Here it is in its entirety:

"Rey is a research biologist who lives in the woods studying an endangered bird species. Ben Solo is a rich playboy whose private plane crashes nearby on a “solo” flight and she nurses him back to health as opposites collide. He falls hard and she convinces him through her ethical behavior (and gorgeous smile) to buy the woods and turn it into a nature preserve where they can make their own pack and wear lots of plaid!"

It was a delight and a privilege to participate in House Plaidam's Plaid Paramour event. Check out the collection! More fics will be added all summer.

I hope you enjoyed this fun little adventure on Ahch-To! If you did, I'd love to hear from you in the comments.

Kisses and Cloacas,

Andabatae

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My other works, for those interested:

- **They Don't Have A Word For What We Are** - canon-compliant, post-TLJ smutfest with lots of plot. Rated E, complete at 69 chapters.
- **Rev Me Up** - Modern AU set at a car show. Rated E, complete at 5 chapters.
- **Satan in a Three-Piece Suit** - Modern enemies-to-lovers AU set in an office. Rated E, WIP
- **The Rebel's Secret Passion" by B.S. Kysses** - Humorous canonverse fic featuring romance novelist/Supreme Leader Kylo Ren and Rey, who is unknowingly his biggest fan. Rated E, WIP (but should wrap up this week)
- **First Touch** - Smutty canonverse one-shot based on the TRoS trailer. Rated E.
- **Nighttime Confessions** - Smutty canonverse one-shot based on the prompt "simultaneous flying, crying, and fucking." Rated E.
- **The Interrogation Chair** - Smutty canonverse one-shot based on the interrogation scene in TFA. Rated E.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!