Falling Into Light

by Jabean

Summary

She took off towards the lifts, running at a full sprint to reach them before Kylo Ren got any closer to her.

One of the lift doors slowly opened. The light bleeding out into the hallway.

The darkness blasting against Rey.

She lurched back, losing her footing. Falling hard onto her behind.

A black boot stepped out of the lift. The sound of mechanical breathing filled her ears.

This was not Kylo Ren. No. This was Darth Vader.

Notes

Hello there!

Thank you for checking this story out!

I just want to warn anyone and everyone that I have never, ever written anything in the Star Wars Universe before. I am almost certain I will butcher things up...if not now, then definitely in the future.

I want to apologize ahead of time. I do hope it is not too awful.
If anyone sees any glaring errors, please don’t hesitate to let me know. Your kindness is greatly appreciated. I am a gentle soul, I swear.

Enjoy!
Chapter 1

Rey awoke with a start, a grunt erupting out of her throat as she sat up quickly. The Force screaming at her that something was terribly wrong.

Dangerous.

She blinked a few times, trying to see where she was, but was unable to see a thing. She was in absolute darkness. Turning her head to try to get her bearings she worked her way through what she remembered.

She had found Luke Skywalker on Ahch-To, old and grey. Far from the legend she heard stories about in the Jakku desert. He refused to teach her. Refused to come back with her and Chewy to the Resistance. He had shut himself off from the Force. She remembered finding a little hut to sleep in for the night, planning to try to convince him once more in the morning that the Resistance needed him. That she needed him.

She sniffed, her head was pounding. Her heart racing. Her eyes adjusting to the darkness, barely able to make out vague shapes of items near to her.

She was no longer in the little hut.

Rey tentatively reached a hand out in front of her as she pushed herself up onto her feet. Cool durasteel met her fingertips. A handle of some sort.

She pushed gently, opening the door.

Squinting as bright light met her eyes, she stepped out of the little room she was in and into a hallway.

Rey spun around, taking in her new environment. Her throat tight when she recognized where she was.

She was on a Star Destroyer. Maybe. It looked slightly different than the style she saw at Starkiller
Perhaps the First Order had old Imperial ships at their disposal. Had the First Order tracked her to Ahch-To? Where was Luke? Chewy?

She turned around to look at the room she had just exited. A supply closet stared back at her.

Rey frowned. It didn’t make sense. Was she a stowaway? She couldn’t remember anything after closing her eyes for some much needed rest from her first day on the island.

She peered down the long hallway, a pair of jet black doors at one end. Dangerous. She turned the opposite direction and began to take a few steps. She needed to find a ship and escape. She needed to get out of here. Figure out where she was. Get back to Luke; to Leia and the Resistance. She didn’t belong here.

She took in what she was wearing. Pleased that she had on what she went to sleep with. Her clothes, her boots. She patted her hip, the lightsaber.

She snorted softly to herself at her ridiculousness of sleeping with the lightsaber. She couldn’t get to sleep without it. Terrified of the thunder and lightning. Of the rain pelting against her little hut. It was something she had never experienced on Jakku.

No. Jakku had other things in the night to be terrified about.

A darkness began coiling around her. Probing her. Curious. Before recoiling sharply and disappearing completely.

Rey gasped. Her heart racing. She needed to hide. She needed to get away from this place. Kylo Ren. Ben Solo. The son of Leia Organa and Han Solo. The nephew of Luke Skywalker. He survived the destruction of Starkiller Base. He survived the lightsaber to the face.

He was going to find her. He was going to kill her.

Rey let out a quiet sob as she peeked around the corner of the hallway. Spotting a pair of lifts only
fifty or so feet away.

She took off towards the lifts, running at a full sprint to reach them before Kylo Ren got any closer to her.

One of the lift doors slowly opened. The light bleeding out into the hallway.

The darkness blasting against Rey.

She lurched back, losing her footing. Falling hard onto her behind.

A black boot stepped out of the lift. The sound of mechanical breathing filled her ears.

Rey looked up, eyes wide as the being stepped entirely out of the elevator.

Her heart was in her throat. She couldn’t breathe. She didn’t understand.

This was not Kylo Ren. No. This was Darth Vader.

“What —“ she gasped, her mind blank. She reached for the lightsaber still strapped to her hip.

The lifeless black mask following her hand as she unclipped the lightsaber from her belt. The helmet quirked slightly. Intrigued.

“You’re supposed to be dead,” she growled as she ignited the blade. Pushing herself up off of the floor. Readying herself in what she hoped was a fighting stance.

A gloved hand moved almost imperceptibly. The lightsaber flying out of Rey’s grasp and into the hand of Vader before he shut it off and clipped the saber to his belt.

“Who are you?” The vocoder rang out.
Rey just shook her head, refusing to answer. She didn’t understand what was going on. Where she was.

She blinked away the tears beginning to form. She was going to die today at the hands of a long dead monster. After surviving the harsh conditions of the Jakku desert alone waiting for her parents to return, she would be dying with no one by her side.


“R-Rey,” her voice wobbled.

“Rey...what?” Vader asked her.

She shook her head. “Just Rey,” she explained quietly. “I don’t have a Family name. Not one that I know.”

“Where are you from?”

Rey swallowed, confused from his questioning. Wondering why he hadn’t killed her yet. “Jakku,” She said quietly. “I’m from Jakku.”

“Jakku?” The mechanical voice asked. Unsurprisingly unfamiliar with her home world.

Rey nodded once. “Imperial junkyard. Desert planet with nothing but crashed Star Destroyers picked apart and sold for rations.” She swallowed, her throat dry. This had to be the strangest conversation she had ever had. She shrugged mentally to herself, the last couple of standard weeks or so had been all around strange for her. She continued her explanation. “The Battle of Jakku was the last before the Empire finally fell, hence the crashed ships.”

Vader raised a gloved hand as if to tell her to keep quiet. “The Empire hasn’t fallen.”

Rey’s stomach dropped. What the kriffing hell was going on?
“I believe I now understand the disturbance in the force around you, Rey of Jakku.” He paused, the cold black eyes of his mask watching her closely. “You are from the future.”

Rey shook her head even though the Force around her was insisting it was true. “That’s impossible.” A weak protest.

“Is it?” Vader asked her coolly. “And I suppose you are an expert on what the Force can do. Your lack of shielding would say otherwise.”

“I don’t know anything about what the Force can do. No one will teach me.” She swallowed once more. Kylo Ren had offered to teach her, to show her the ways of the Force. She had responded by slicing his face open. Now she was standing in front of his grandfather discussing time travel in the middle of the hallway of a Star Destroyer. A bubble of laughter erupted out of her at the absurdity of it all. “That not entirely true,” she told the Jedi killer standing in front of her. “Your grandson offered to teach me and I responded by slashing his face open with the lightsaber you had when you were a Jedi.”

Vader stepped even closer to her, towering over her small frame. “Grandson?” He held up a hand to prevent her from answering his question. “Not here.” He grabbed her arm and began marching towards the black double doors that Rey had ran from earlier. Rey barely able to keep up with his long strides.

“Where am I?” She gasped as they reached the double doors.

Vader merely waved his hand. The doors opening in response. “Inside.”

Rey hesitated. Vader pushed her roughly into the large room.

The doors slid shut behind them. Locking Rey in.

“Stay there.” He pointed to her as he made his way further into the room.

Rey looked around the dimly lit room. They were in his quarters. A hyperbaric chamber was retrofitted into the smaller room off to the side of the main quarters, prepped and ready to go.
Medical droids were situated around the smaller room. Shut off for the time being, if Rey understood the lack of acknowledgement from the droids correctly.

She looked to the other side of the quarters, spotting a door that was firmly shut. The centre of the main quarters had a large table with seating for six. A communications device in the centre of the table.

Vader stepped closer to it before waving his hand once more. Was it really that difficult to press a button manually?

The holo came to life. An older man, alert and dressed in an Imperial uniform answered briskly.

“My Lord,” he bowed his head slightly, waiting for Vader to address him.

“I insist that I not be bothered for the rest of the day,” he began. “Unless there is an emergency. Or if the Emperor wishes to speak with me. Is that clear?”

The man blanched in shock before catching himself. He gave a curt nod of his head. “Of course, my Lord. I can handle it for today.”

Vader shut the holo off without replying and turned his attention back to Rey.

“Who was that?” Rey asked, trying to gain as much information as she could.

Vader waved her off. “Someone unimportant.” He came closer, not exactly crowding her but well aware of his ability to intimidate. “Grandson,” he prompted.

Rey hesitated, looking down at the floor. General Organa had given her a rough outline of the major events during the rule of the Empire, before it was finally defeated. She told Rey about her family, her biological family, insisting that it was important that she knew. That the Force was insisting to Leia to tell her as much as she could before Rey left for Ahch-To.

Rey knew that Darth Vader was Anakin Skywalker, father of Leia and Luke. Leia told Rey that her birth mother was Padmé Amidala, a former Senator and Queen of Naboo. She knew Vader didn’t
actually see Luke for the first time until the Death Star, when Luke was nineteen standard years old. She knew that Vader had no idea Leia was his daughter until after he tortured her for information on the location of a Rebel base. General Organa didn’t know when he put it together, just that when he was in Luke’s arms dying, he told her brother to apologize to his sister for him.

The Force was telling Rey to work with Darth Vader. To work with Anakin Skywalker. That she could trust him with her life. She shivered at that notion. It was terrifying to think about, trusting Vader, but she had no other choice. She was out of her depth and in grave danger. This was the time with Palpatine. The Emperor. The mastermind behind it all.

“What year is it?” Rey asked, looking back up at the mask of Vader. “I mean...how many years since the beginning of the Galactic Empire?” She hesitated before continuing. “I don’t know everything, I swear. Just certain things that I was told by General Or — my General — before I left for an assignment. Jakku doesn’t exactly have the best education system, and this —” she waved her arms around. “This is far before my time.”

“Nineteen standard years,” Vader answered her. His helmet shook slightly. “Almost nineteen standard years...a few months short.”

Rey nodded. “I don’t think you’ve met them yet,” she said quietly. “At least...not both of them.” General Organa was from Alderaan, a core world. Vader might have met her when she was a child. Rey didn’t know. Leia never told her that much.

“Them?”

“Twins,” Rey responded quietly. “Padmé was pregnant with twins.”

Vader was silent, save for his mechanical breathing.

Rey hesitated, unsure what she should do. Tell him, the Force insisted. Tell him about his family.

“My General is your daughter,” Rey told him quietly. “My assignment was to find her brother. Your son. He had gone into hiding. Turned himself off from the Force after his nephew destroyed his new Jedi Order and fled with a few Force users to their new Master. Snoke.” She swallowed tightly. “My General doesn’t know why her son fell...not exactly, just that Snoke had something to do with it. She told me that she could sense the darkness inside him before he was even born. That she hoped that her love could prevent anything bad from happening to him. She said as he got older
it got worse. And because she hadn’t been trained in the ways of the Force, she sent her son to his uncle to help him. To keep him safe; protect him from the darkness inside him.” Rey shook her head. “She said that it was a mistake. That, in hindsight, it was the wrong thing to do.”

“Did you find him?” Vader asked her quietly. “Did you find...my son?”

Rey nodded. “I did. He wasn’t happy to see me. Told me to leave; that he wanted nothing to do with me. That he couldn’t help the Resistance fight the First Order. He said that he came to Ah — the planet he was on — to die.” Rey informed him quietly. “It had started to rain heavily — thunder and lightning. I had never experienced that before on Jakku. It terrified me. I hunkered down in a little hut to spend the night. I was going to pester him some more the following morning.” A pause. “Instead I woke up in the storage closet down the hallway.”

Rey watched closely as Vader took in what she had told him. It was a lot of information to digest. She could feel his anger bubbling under the surface. A storm beginning to build up. She didn’t think his anger was directed at her.

“Why am I here?” She asked him after watching him shuffle from foot to foot. Clenching and unclenching his fists. His mask was directed down towards the floor. “Why haven’t you killed me yet? You had a reputation...have a reputation...why am I still breathing?”

“The Force,” the mechanical voice replied. Vader continued to focus on the floor of his quarters. “The Force has been screaming at me to not kill you. It has been insisting that you are extremely important. That I need to protect you.” The storm began to subside.

“I’ve been looking after myself since I was six,” Rey scoffed. “I hardly need someone like you to protect me.” She would not turn to the dark side. Refused to. She didn’t care what the Force told her.

“You are untrained in the Force.” The mask focused on her once more. “I give you one standard week before you are hunted down by the Emperor if you do not learn how to shield yourself.” He paused, stepping closer to her and looking down at her. “Your light is blinding. You need shields desperately.”

“Hunted down by you, you mean,” Rey stubbornly corrected. “On the orders of Palpatine.”

A beat of silence. “Tell me who my children are — their names — I will find them and overthrow
the Emperor,” Vader insisted, changing tactics. “I will end this. All of it.”

“No.”

“You will!” Vader yelled at Rey, his fists clenching tightly.

“No! You didn’t see your son until he was nineteen standard years old, on the kriiffing Death Star!” Rey insisted, stepping back from the Sith Lord. “Within the next year you capture your daughter.” She paused. “But you didn’t realize she was your daughter at that time. At least, that’s what she told me. You tortured her for hours to get information, never realizing you were torturing your own blood. That or you were too foregone to care.”

Vader took a step back. A sick noise erupting from his vocoder. A distorted wail.

“I won’t tell you her name...not yet.” Rey informed him quietly. Realizing she had hurt him. “I don’t think you’re ready to know just who she is. I don’t think you are stable enough.” She stepped closer to him, a hand raised in a placating gesture. She needed to compromise. “I need to be trained — you are right about that. I won’t last a week before I’m slaughtered.” She gave the black mask a small smile. “Your son’s name is Luke. And right now, today in this time, Luke is safe. He is being protected; he has people looking out for him.” Rey thought of the man Leia had told her about. The Jedi Master, Obi-Wan Kenobi. How he went by Ben Kenobi in today’s time, and how he had hid with Luke on Tatooine. The man her son was named after. Her and Han Solo’s last hope.

“Luke?” The vocoder asked somewhat quietly. Vader had calmed down upon hearing that information.


“After I train you how to build shields will you tell me my daughter’s name?”

“If the Force allows it,” Rey gave him. “I really don’t know what I am supposed to do here; I’m not sure how to get back home, if I can at all. I am just listening to what the Force is telling me to tell you.” She sniffed. “I don’t understand why I’m here. I’m a nobody. A scavenger from a junkyard planet. I’m nothing.”
Vader shook his head. “Not to me. You are important to me, you told me about my children. I will protect you... with my life, if I must. The Force brought you here for a reason, Rey of Jakku. You must listen to the Force. Listen to what it tells you.” He paused, hooking his thumbs in his belt. “The galaxy turns to banthashit if you don’t listen. Trust me, I know.”

Rey’s stomach growled loudly in response. She clutched at it in embarrassment. “Sorry.”

Vader looked at her closely, taking in her appearance before turning towards the doorway. “SD-2826, you will go to the kitchen and get our guest something to eat. Tell no one who it is for. Do not draw any attention to yourself.”

Rey turned, spotting a droid situated in the corner of the room near the entrance.

“Oh course, Lord Vader.” SD-2826 wheeled out of the room.

“I will begin training you after you eat.” Vader informed Rey. “It is easier to focus if you have no distractions.”

“Nothing dark,” Rey insisted. “I don’t wish to learn about the dark side of the Force.”

Vader gave her a single nod. “Shields for now. You cannot be found out by the Emperor. He will destroy you.”

“He will kill me you mean.”

“No... he will force you to fall to the dark side.” Vader informed her. “You are exceptionally powerful, I can tell already without having trained you. I can feel it in you. Your light is blinding. We need to hide your brightness from the Emperor. He will break you down until he moulds you into what he wants.”

Rey swallowed tightly. This seemed to hit close to home for Vader. “Like he did to you, you mean.”

“I chose the dark side,” Vader insisted. He pulled out a chair at the table and pointed for Rey to sit.
“I chose the power of the dark side in an attempt to save my wife. Palpatine told me he could save her from death if I turned. I did everything he asked of me and I still failed to save her. To save Padmé.” He sat down on one of the chairs. “I naively thought that he lied to everyone else, except me. I believed him to be a...confidant.” His hand resting on the surface of the table curled into a fist. “I believed my child had died with Padmé, until now. You’ve informed me that not only was that belief incorrect, but I, in fact, have two children. That Padmé gave birth to twins before she died.”

Rey sat down on the chair he pulled out for her. “I could be lying.”

Vader shook his head. “The Force says otherwise.”

“Why did you believe your wife was going to die?” Rey was curious. She needed to understand him as a person.

Vader watched her closely. “Visions. I had visions of her dying. Nightmares.” He paused, contemplating. “I already had a vision that came true. There was no reason for this one to be any different. She had just informed me that she was pregnant. I could not lose her, too. Would not.” He looked down at his gloved hands on the table. “You have to understand, Rey of Jakku, our relationship was forbidden. Our marriage. The Jedi are forbidden to form any sort of attachment. It was seen as something that would lead to the dark side.”

_It’s not that simple_, the Force cried out. Rey’s mind was racing. The Force felt odd, churning. It was the truth, but not entirely. _It was the truth for Vader_. “You thought you’d be kicked out of the Jedi Order if they found out you were married...and expecting a child. So you went to Palpatine instead for help.”

Vader shook his head. “I went to the Jedi first. Grand Master Yoda — I told him of my nightmare, and he told me I had to let Padmé go. That it was the way of the Force.”

Rey watched him with wide eyes. Her mouth gaping with no sound coming out of it.

“I did not tell him that she was expecting my child. I told no one, not even Palpatine.” Vader paused, lost in a memory. “Obi-Wan figured it out. He came with Padmé on her ship to confront me on Mustafar.”

Rey’s stomach dropped. “Obi-Wan Kenobi?”
The entrance to Vader’s quarters opened to admit SD-2826. The droid wheeled over to the table, clutching a tray of food in its arms.

“Your meal, Lady Rey,” the droid informed her as it set down the tray in front of her.

Rey blanched. “I’m not...just Rey is fine. Thank you for the food, SD-2826.”

“You are very welcome, just Rey.” SD-2826 removed the cover and rolled away from the table.

Rey sat gaping at the food in front of her. She had never seen food such as this. The colours alone were shocking. “How — I thought Star Destroyers just had rations. Unkar Plutt gave us scavengers the rations found in the crashed Star Destroyers as a form of payment.” She looked up from her plate to look at her host. “This doesn’t look like any ration portion I’ve ever had, and I’ve had a fair number of them.”

Vader had quirked his helmet at her. “We recently stopped by an Imperial Refueling Station, we picked up local food from there. I allow my crew to eat more than just rations when able to do so. It is a luxury that strengthens their loyalty to me.” He gestured to her plate. “Eat.”

Rey nodded, picking up a bread roll. She took a huge bite of the soft bread. It was delicious; the nicest thing she had ever eaten. “This is good,” she said chewing her bread loudly.

She dropped the roll back on her plate and picked up a round purple thing. “What is this called?” She waved it around.

“That is a jogan fruit.” Vader said. He might have been amused, it was difficult to tell with the vocoder.

Rey gasped. “I’ve never had a fruit before.” She looked at it in amazement before setting it back down on her plate. She would leave it for later. A treat. She looked closer at her plate. There was some meat protein and some sort of vegetable along with her bread. She frowned, she couldn’t eat it with her hands like she normally did with her ration portions.

Carefully picking up the fork next to her plate she stabbed at the meat pieces. Chewing the pieces
of meat slowly, she hummed in content. It was far better than any veg protein she had ever had.

“You know who Obi-Wan Kenobi is,” Vader prompted her after she had a few more bites of her food.

Rey nodded. “I know of him. He was dead before my time.” She frowned, wondering what more she could tell him. “My General told me about him. Before I left on my assignment, she took me aside to tell me what she could about the Empire. To tell me about her biological family. She said the Force told her that it was important that I knew things before I left.” She paused, knowing she was treading on shaky ground. “He protected Padmé’s and yours children from the Emperor. Kept them safe.” She grimaced. “Is keeping them safe.”

Vader’s fist pounded the table. “He stole my children from me! He put me in this suit!”

Rey blinked. “Children are not objects that can be stolen,” she told him, her voice quivering with emotion. “They are people. They cannot — should not — be thought of like a piece of junk.” She took him in, well aware he was furious. “Your own actions put you in that suit. You said it yourself, you chose the dark side.”

Her jogan fruit exploded. Vader was half raised from his chair. Hands pressed down on the table. His mechanical breathing holding its rhythm, refusing to let him pant in anger.


Rey swallowed. Nervous for what she knew she needed to say to him. “You lost your children because you chose the dark side. Kenobi protected your children as best as he could from the Emperor, because you chose the dark side. And yes, when the Emperor’s weapon became known and he realized that weapon was you, he hid your own children from you because you chose the dark side.” She looked him square in the black eyes of his mask. “You lost everything because you chose the dark side.”

Vader sat back down in his chair and went to put his masked face in his hands before returning his hands to the table surface. He was looking down at the table, not looking at Rey. A few minutes passed in silence, broken only by the sound of his breathing apparatus and the sounds of Rey’s fork on her plate as she went back to munching on the food before her.

“I lost my children because of my actions. Because of Palpatine.” He looked back up at Rey. “I
must get them back. For Padmé.”

“You can only do that if you return to the light side.”

“That is impossible. It is impossible for me to return to the light. I am saturated in the Darkside. There is no light left.” He pointed a finger at Rey. “Nothing. The Force doesn’t work that way.”

Rey smirked, taking another bite of her bread. “You’re so full of banthashit. You don’t return to the light for another few years...so obviously it’s in there somewhere,” she said with a full mouth gesturing at him with her free hand.

Vader just shook his head.

“In my time, what I learned from my General was that you did return to the light moments before your death. For Luke.” Rey swallowed her food. “You did it for your son, Luke. You killed Palpatine to protect Luke from him and that action took you out as well.” She shook her head. “Something about Force lightning wreaking havoc on your life support systems.” She motioned to his suit. “Your son saved you, brought you back to the light. It was why my General sent her son to him. To prevent him from falling completely.”

Vader didn’t respond at all. He just looked at Rey.

“Just because something hasn’t happened yet, does not mean it will never happen.” Rey told him quietly. She pushed her plate away having finished her meal. Perhaps she get to have a jogan fruit on a later day. Hopefully it wouldn’t get vaporized before she could eat it.

“We need to work on your shields,” Vader informed her, changing the topic. He stood up from the table.

Rey did the same. “How do I do that?” She was eager to learn. Wanting to learn. The Force was howling in approval.

Vader motioned for her to follow him as he stepped towards the closed door on the side wall of his quarters. The door opened as he drew nearer, he motioned for Rey to enter before him.
She stepped into the smaller sized room, taking in her surroundings. She could feel Vader behind her. The doorway snapping shut.

Rey exhaled. She was calm. The room appeared to be a meditation room of some sort. The lighting was soft, the floor was some sort of green foliage. Tiny water fountains were situated in each of the four corners of the room. The sound of the trickling water drowned out the noise of the ship engines.

“This is my meditation room,” Vader said from close behind her. “You will stay here when I am needed elsewhere. No one comes in this room but me. It is safe for you here.” He pointed to a small door almost hidden from view. “That is a refresher. It is yours to use. This room used to be the bedroom of the last commander of this ship.”

Rey turned to look at him. “What happened to him?”

“What do you think?” His dry humour was leaching through his vocoder.

Rey nodded subtly. She shouldn’t condone murder, really. But this was a very beautiful room.

“Grab a pillow,” Vader pointed to the far side of the room.

There was a large pile of pillows of various shapes, sizes, and colours. They did not match the ambiance of the room. Rey wondered where the one and only Darth Vader found such things.

Rey took a single step towards the pillows before stopping abruptly. She gave Vader a look before raising a hand, focusing on the tackiest, fluffiest pillow she could see.

It flew into her open hand. She looked back up at Vader as she clutched her pillow. She could feel his grin on her.

“You’ve done that before,” he prompted her. Motioning for her to sit down on the floor. He slowly sat down. Carefully. Watching Rey the entire time.

Rey dropped the pillow on the floor and plopped down on it, facing Vader. Nodding. “Just once.”
“Tell me about it.” He prompted her once more. “What was happening around you when you did that. Be specific.”

“I was on Starkiller Base.” At Vader’s wave of confusion she explained. “Death Star 3.0 according to my General. Bigger and badder than the first two.” Vader nodded, gesturing for her to continue. “Me and Finn were attempting to reach the Fal — our ship — to get away. The base was beginning to implode on itself.” She threw Vader a look. “Dictatorships never learn.”

“I did not agree with the construction of the current Death Star. I had no say in it. No control.” Vader insisted. “Its construction is not complete as of yet. But it is close,” he informed her.

Rey nodded. She knew this from her impromptu history lesson.

“Anyway, Finn and I were running through the forest of the base.” Vader quirked his helmet. Rey could sense his puzzlement at her statement. “I believe it used to be a planet that was hollowed out. I’m not entirely sure though.” Vader nodded. Rey continued, “Ben...no Kylo Ren had just murdered his father and he had been shot in the stomach in retaliation by one of his father’s best friends. He was chasing us through the forest. Catching us, we didn’t know where we were going.”

Rey started playing with the little strands of foliage. She had yet to explain what exactly happened on Starkiller Base. To anyone. Nothing specific. “Kylo Ren caught up to us. Cornered us. He yelled at me and Finn, said ‘we’re not done yet’ and ignited his lightsaber. I just had the blaster that I had taken from a stormtrooper. I went to fire at him and he just threw me against a tree. I lost consciousness.” Rey swallowed tightly. “I eventually came too. I saw Finn get his spine sliced open. He had been fighting Kylo Ren with that lightsaber.” She motioned to the second saber clipped to his belt. “I pushed myself up onto my feet and reached for the saber. Kylo was between myself and the saber. He too was reaching for it. He was bleeding out pretty badly by that point.” Rey swallowed tightly. “The saber flew by him and into my hand. I ignited it and started fighting with him.”

“And that was when you sliced his face open,” Vader provided.

Rey nodded. “Then the planet split open, him on one side, Finn and I on the other. Our ship found us and we got out of there. Kylo Ren was still conscious when I last saw him. I assume he made it out before the planet blew entirely.”

Vader nodded. “Probably. If he is this Snoke’s apprentice he would’ve been saved before the base
“Exploded.” He looked closely at Rey. “Was that the first time you used the Force to the best of your knowledge?”

Rey shook her head. “Your saber called out to me before Starkiller Base.” She hesitated, unsure how specific she should be. “On Takodana. It was hidden in the basement of a pub. I could hear children’s voices, so I went looking. Exploring. I found it in a small wooden box in a storage room.” She swallowed. “I touched it and saw a bunch of visions. Different things. My past. Kylo Ren. Other things.” Rey shrugged, not wanting to talk about what she saw. “I fell out of the room and saw the owner of the pub watching me. She insisted that I take the saber. That it was now mine; that it called to me. I told her to get it away from me. That I just wanted to go home. Back to Jakku. My parents were supposed to come back for me. I didn’t want to miss them because I was off planet.” She sniffed as she played with the foliage.

“She informed me that who I was waiting for on Jakku were never coming back, but that someone else still could. I ran out of the pub and into the forest to get away from it all. It was...overwhelming. So overwhelming.” Rey looked at Vader. He needed to understand how she felt.

He gave her a small nod of his head. It was her awakening in the Force, Rey realised.

Rey sniffed, continuing on. “Then TIE Fighters came screeching overhead. And Kylo Ren showed up, mask and all, and followed me into the forest. He overpowered me. Made it so I couldn’t move.” Vader nodded in understanding. “He started reading my mind, said the droid — BB-8 is his name — showed me the map to Luke. The First Order was hunting him down...or at least trying to for some reason. I’m not sure why.” Rey shrugged self-consciously at her lack of knowledge. “He knocked me out. When I woke up I was strapped to an...interrogation chair...on Starkiller Base. Kylo Ren was crouched in the corner of the room watching me. Wearing his stupid helmet.” Rey scoffed, he didn’t even need the thing. “We exchanged some words, I called him a creature in a mask. He removed it in response, I thought to scare me. But he didn’t even need it,” Rey told Vader. “He was wearing it to hide away. He’s not a creature at all. He’s...a...a prince.”

“He’s wearing it to hide his emotions,” Vader informed her. “Intimidation.” He motioned for her to continue.

Rey frowned, Vader was angry again. No. He was annoyed. Rey finished her tale. “He started poking around in my head. I pushed back and got into his. Saw his fears. Called him out on them and he fled the room. I suggested to the guard to let me go and to leave his blaster behind. I escaped.”

“And that’s where you ran into your friend Finn, and your other rescuers,” Vader supplied, trying to make sense of her tale.
“Yes.” Rey nodded.

“Force suggestion, what you did to your guard, is one of the first things that young Force sensitive beings can do.” Vader began lecturing. “Young children do not necessarily realize they are using the Force to get whatever it is they want. It almost comes naturally.” He was watching Rey closely, she could feel his curiosity brimming. “You pushing someone, a strong Force user by the sounds of it, out of your mind and slipping into theirs is extremely difficult to do. Even for those who are fully trained. It can also be dangerous,” he informed her.

“How?”

“Poking around in one’s mind, as you put it, leaves the victim susceptible to severe brain injury if it is not done properly. The mind reader has to carefully pick through the memories, merely bashing through the mind can lead to brain damage.” Vader explained to her carefully. “Severe brain damage. The victim would be left as a husk, unable to function.”

Rey swallowed nervously.

“Tell me Rey, were the memories that Kylo Ren was shuffling through something you had forgotten about, or were the memories or thoughts, ones that you had every day?”

Rey nodded. “Thoughts I had almost everyday. He never actually got to the map that BB-8 showed me.”

Vader nodded. “Good.” He paused. “I assume for Kylo Ren it was the same. What did you say to him? What did you find?”

Rey looked down at the green foliage. “I saw his fear that he’d never be as strong as you. That he wasn’t good enough. That he was weak, too weak to properly carry out your legacy.” She swallowed once more. “I told him, mocked him really, that he’d never be as strong as Darth Vader.”

“And then he fled the room.”
Rey nodded.

“Good.” Vader told her almost proudly. “If that were me, I would have killed you right then and there if you got into my mind.” A beat. “Not that you would’ve gotten into my mind in the first place. I have far more training than my foolish grandson. More things to hide. I’ve been hiding them since I was a Jedi.”

Rey swallowed. It was good to know.

“Shields,” Vader continued on. “Most Force users will have built up shields naturally, before they learn that they are sensitive to the Force. They are not great shields by any stretch. Rudimentary at best. But they are still there. Those with the Force are sensitive to emotions from those around them. Anger, fear, passion, hate...or happiness, love...joy even. Untrained Force users will have built up these shields naturally to protect them from those emotions. They can become overwhelming for some, especially if they are strong in the Force.” He pointed at Rey with a gloved finger. “You have no shields whatsoever. Nothing. Your light is blinding, like a warning beacon for everyone with Force abilities to see. You need to learn to build your shields up, so your emotions are not projected. And you need to build your shields up to prevent yourself from getting overwhelmed with other people’s emotions.” He paused for a moment. “I’ve shielded myself so that I don’t overwhelm you completely. Two strong force users in close proximity can be a bit much.”

“Thank you.”

Vader nodded. “How many beings live on Jakku?” He asked Rey. “I assume it is not a heavily populated planet being a giant pile of sand.” His disdain was apparent.

Rey snorted in amusement. “I’m not exactly sure...maybe around twenty thousand in total.” She told him quietly. “Niima Outpost will get travelers; those needing a part for their damaged ship. Sometimes they trade for goods, supplies. There are three settlements, not including Niima Outpost.”

“Did you reside at Niima Outpost? Or in one of the other settlements?”

Rey shook her head. “I didn’t live in any settlement. I hadn’t for years. I lived in a tipped over AT-AT Walker away from everyone else.”
Vader rubbed his thigh as he responded. “You probably never needed to shield yourself when you were on Jakku. As a result of that, those Force abilities were not developed.” He pointed a finger at Rey. “You’ve always had the Force inside you, it just awoke at a later time than most other Force sensitives. Likely out of desperation given the situations you found yourself in.”

Rey hummed in understanding. It seemed logical.

“What do you know of the Force, Rey?” Vader asked her.

Rey frowned. She had, of course, heard the legends of the Jedi. But they were just that, legends. They were fairy-tales; stories to bring hope to those in desperate need. She settled on facts; on what she knew for certain. “The Force...allows you to control people...and move things with your mind.”

It sounded pathetic even to Rey.

Vader just looked at Rey for a few moments before responding. “You *can* do that with the Force, that is true. But that is not what I meant.” He paused. “The Force...is what gives...Force sensitive people their power. It is an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us, binding the galaxy together.”

Rey nodded, following what he was saying.

“I want you to close your eyes and open yourself up to the Force. Feel what is all around you.” He paused. Waiting for her to follow his instructions. When Rey did so he continued on. “Tell me what you see. What you feel…”

Rey exhaled slowly. Eyes closed. “I see...I see...people moving around the ship we’re on. Below us. Thousands of people.” She swallowed, nervous. “I feel their energy...their life. I can feel you right in front of me...darkness. Power.” She looked closer at Vader’s Force signature in front of her, curious to explore what another Force sensitive person felt like. Anger. Pain. Hate. Intrigue. Curiosity. Wonder. Hope. “There are splashes of light inside you...muted but still there.”

“Pull back to yourself,” Vader instructed Rey, ignoring her assessment of him. “We will get to work on your shields.”

“Will you be in my mind?” Rey asked him cautiously. She had so much to protect.
“No. I will just tell you what to do for now.”

Rey exhaled slowly, pulling back to herself. “Alright. Tell me what I need to do.”

The two got to work constructing Rey’s shields. Vader giving her helpful hints to hide herself from other Force sensitive beings. It was not entirely foolproof, if Rey’s emotions got the best of her, her shields were at risk to develop cracks and eventually break down completely. It was something that Rey knew she needed to constantly work on. She was in a time where she didn’t belong, sharing space with two extremely dark, extremely powerful Force users.

Rey blinked open her eyes, testing her shields. Vader was watching her closely.

“All right?” He asked her.

Rey nodded. “Thank you.”

Vader gave her a nod of his head. “You picked up my instructions very quickly. I am impressed.”

A knock was heard. Disrupting the two Force users.

“Lord Vader,” SD-2826 called through the door. “The Emperor wishes to speak with you. He is awaiting your call.”

Rey hissed.

Vader stood up from his spot on the floor. “You keep your shields tight, Rey. We can not afford to have you found. You are not yet ready.” He turned to leave the room. “It will be okay. I promise.”

Vader left the room quickly. Rey remained on her pillow, hanging on tightly to her shields.

Breathing slow. Trying to remain calm. She could do nothing but wait and hope for the best.
Rey sat huddled in the mediation room, arms wrapped around the backs of her legs with her head pressed hard against her knees. Trying desperately to remain small both physically and in the Force.

The Emperor was speaking with Vader via holo on the other side of the door. She could just hear the sound of voices speaking, not quite loud enough to make out what was being said.

She shivered as Vader’s darkness leached through the door and into the room. His hatred pulsing against her shields.

And his... fear. Vader was terrified.

What had the Emperor said? What did he know?

Rey sorted through the timeline General Organa gave her during her impromptu history lesson prior to her leaving for Ahch-To. She had no idea what was going on. No idea where she was. She was completely in the dark.

She needed to ask Vader for specifics when his conversation with Palpatine was finished.

She breathed in deeply, trying to center her mind. To prevent her emotions from running rampant. The Emperor could not — would not — find out about her. Not yet. Not now. She was stubborn. Her stubbornness had kept her alive on Jakku. It would keep her alive now. The Emperor would only find out about her when she allowed it. When she was ready for him.

She tilted her head up, glaring at the door. She needed to be trained to fight. She needed to be strong.

Vader was her key. She would get him to teach her, to train her in the ways of the Force. To teach her how to fight.

Then when she was good and ready, she’d take the fight to Palpatine. And perhaps, in time, save
Vader from his own darkness. That must be why the Force sent her back to this time. Help kill one monster and save the other one from himself.

The talking ceased. Silence ensued for a few moments.

The door opened, Vader stood tall in the entrance to the room. His breathing apparatus the only sound as he stood there watching Rey.

She let him gather his thoughts. Bring his emotions back under control. Something was wrong and they both needed a clear head to fix it.

She watched him closely, refusing to shy away in fear. Waiting.

He stepped into the room, the door sliding shut containing the two of them.

“She let him gather his thoughts. Bring his emotions back under control. Something was wrong and they both needed a clear head to fix it.

She watched him closely, refusing to shy away in fear. Waiting.

He stepped into the room, the door sliding shut containing the two of them.

“The Emperor has felt the disturbance in the Force,” he began, his arms crossed across his armoured chest. Across his life support system. “He believes the disturbance to be from the son of Anakin Skywalker. He believes him to be strong in the Force like his father. He wishes for me to find Luke and bring him to Coruscant to meet him in person.”

Rey’s heart stopped. “He wants to turn him to the dark side…”

Vader inclined his helmet in agreement. “Did you know of this? Did your General inform you of this in your time?”

Rey swallowed. Her thoughts racing. She shook her head. “The General told me that it wasn’t until the second Death Star before Luke met the Emperor in person. I was unaware that he even knew of Luke prior to that.” She paused. No…Luke destroyed the first Death Star. That was what the General had said. “That’s not accurate,” Rey told Vader. “Luke was the one who destroyed the first Death Star. The Emperor would have known about him then. Right?”

Vader nodded. But remained silent.

“My being here has messed with the timeline, hasn’t it? It has skewed what happens when…” Rey
was worried.

“Perhaps,” Vader conceded. “Or perhaps Luke and your General did not know of the Emperors keen interest in him back before he even destroyed the Death Star.” He began pacing around the room. “The first Death Star is not quite finished. I was unaware that a second one was even being built until you mentioned it.”

“It wasn’t finished when it was destroyed by the Rebels.” Rey told him quietly. “It was still under construction.”

“Even if it hasn’t begun construction now, the plans to build it are in place. It has taken years to get the first Death Star to the point it is at today.” He stopped his pacing. “How much time between the first and the second Death Star?”

Rey swallowed. “Four years.”

Vader shook his head. “I cannot delay my finding Luke that long.” He pointed at Rey. “You said Kenobi,” he spat the name out — even the vocoder picked up his disdain. “Trained my son in the Force. How much training would he have by now? He would be almost nineteen years old. When did Kenobi begin teaching him?”

Rey looked down at her hands in her lap. “To my knowledge he is unaware he is even Force sensitive right now. He’s just a farm boy.” Dread filled her stomach. “He doesn’t even know that Kenobi is a Jedi Knight.”

“That’s —” Vader held up a hand, as if to stop himself from speaking his mind. “He has no idea...none whatsoever...” He stepped forward and pointed a finger at Rey. “You said...you said he was being protected.” His anger was pulsating around her.

“He is...from afar.” Rey tried pushing his anger away from her. “Luke’s adoptive family wants nothing to do with Kenobi.”

“And just who is Luke’s adoptive family?” Vader questioned her.

Rey shook her head in vain.
“Tell me their names, Rey of Jakku.” He entered her mind and prodded at her shields. Searching for a weakness. Knocking against her walls. Testing.

“Please stop,” Rey begged him from the ground. “You’re hurting me. Please get out of my head.” Tears began to run down her cheeks. She couldn’t hold him out for much longer. She didn’t have the strength or the skill.

Vader pushed and pushed. Searching for even the smallest of openings to slither through.

Rey sobbed. Her head was pounding in pain once more. Vader was going to kill her. Pick apart her head and slaughter her when he was finished getting what he wanted. She let that thought fill her mind, hoping he would see just what she expected from him.

Vader made a distorted noise and pulled back abruptly, dropping to his knees in front of Rey. His hands raised in front of him, palms out. “I am sorry...I lost my temper,” he admitted to Rey. “I apologize for my anger. It was not my intention to hurt you.”

Rey slapped her tears away. “Intentional or not, it’s what you did.” She stood up, looking down at Vader on his knees before her. “Your anger hurts. A lot”

Vader nodded without looking up at her, well aware of his effect on people.

“Look at me,” Rey growled at him. His mask tipped back and peered up at her. “We need to figure out a way to protect your son. We need to figure out a way to get communications to Kenobi and tell him just what is going on.” She paused. “Kenobi must have also felt the disturbance in the Force from my arrival in this time. Do you agree?”

Vader didn’t answer right away. His helmet quirked slightly. “It is likely,” he conceded. “Unless he hid himself from the Force. Turned himself off, like Luke did in your time.”

*If he wasn’t looking for it, he could have missed it.* The Force unhelpfully told Rey. Rey sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose turning away from the man on his knees in front of her. They needed to inform Kenobi somehow. Someway.
Rey turned back to look at Vader still kneeling before her. “If...if we sent droids to give Kenobi a message, would that...work?” She had a feeling Tatooine was very similar to Jakku. Droids would be risky for such an important task.

Vader shook his head. “They would have no way to defend themselves if the Emperor had spies where he is.” He paused, Rey could feel his eyes watching her closely. His keenness was bleeding through his shields. “I could go. I could be the messenger. I could track down Kenobi and tell him that I know about Luke. I could tell him about you. About what the Emperor is expecting from me.”

Rey snorted. “And you wouldn’t kill him? You wouldn’t hurt him...or hurt Luke? Or take Luke back with you?”


The truth rang strong in the Force. Rey was shocked. “Why?” She asked Vader quietly. “Why wouldn’t you harm Kenobi? He took your son...hid your son from you.”

Vader nodded. “He did...but right now, the Emperor is the bigger issue. It is what I need to focus on.”

There was more to it than that. Something Vader wasn’t telling her. Rey frowned. “You’re not exactly...inconspicuous.” She gestured at his armour, helmet, and cape. “You wouldn’t be able to visit in secret. The Emperor's spies would find out about it rather quickly.”

Vader nodded. “I will insist that Kenobi, Luke, and his guardians flee. I will threaten them if I must.”

“You promise,” Rey asked him quietly. She didn’t know what else to do. The Force was annoyingly quiet on the subject.

Vader gave her a nod. “I give you my word, Rey.”
That too was the truth.

Rey swallowed. It was now or never. “According to my General, Kenobi should be hiding in the Southwestern edge of Tatooine’s Dune Sea.

Shock erupted from Vader. He was surprised. “I will tell our pilots to change course and head for Tatooine. I will take my TIE down to the planet and give him our message.” He stood up. “I won’t take longer than a few hours.” He turned to leave the room, stopping as he reached the doorway.

“I am sorry I hurt you earlier, Rey. I truly am.” He looked back at Rey standing in the middle of the room.

She could feel the regret pouring off of him. “Don’t let it happen again, please.”

Vader nodded and left the room.

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Vader was seething as he watched his home world from the command center of his Star Destroyer. Far enough away to not draw the attention of the occupants of the planet. He couldn’t afford to give Kenobi any warning of their imminent meeting.

There was too much history for him here. Too much pain. Anguish. It was the perfect location to hide his son, he’d give Kenobi that. He knew how much Anakin hated this place. How much he hated this place.

Footsteps came closer to Vader. Hesitancy and nervousness radiated off of the man coming up behind him. Vader rolled his eyes at this pathetic excuse of a soldier. He spun around to face the officer, almost giving the man heart failure in the process.

He held in his chuckle. Tatooine wasn’t funny.
“My Lord.” The officer bowed his head. “Your ship is ready.”

Vader didn’t acknowledge the man at all. Instead he made his way to the hanger, to his TIE Advanced.

Strapping in and running through a systems check, he took off out of the hanger less than a second after he got the clearance from the control tower.

He would visit Kenobi for no more than an hour. That was all the time he had. Kenobi needed to find a ship to get off of the planet, it was no longer safe for him or Luke to hide there.

After breaking atmosphere he dropped sharply towards the surface. The less time he spent high in the sky the better. He sailed over the Dune Sea, flying low enough to hide his location from any potential radar the Hutts had on the planet. After just a few minutes he spotted a lone hut in what would be the Southwestern edge. Kenobi.

Landing not ten feet away from the door to his former Master’s home, Vader began the shut down of his ship. Movement in front of him drew his attention as he unclipped his harness.

Vader looked up. Kenobi stood in the doorway, arms crossed in an almost bored stance. He wasn’t fooled. He knew Kenobi had his saber on him. He knew it was likely already in his hand, tucked under his arm. Waiting for Vader to make the first move.

Vader popped the door open and climbed out of his TIE. Dropping down onto the sand below.

Vader held his hands in front of him. The universal display of ‘I mean no harm’. “Kenobi,” he greeted. “We need to discuss some things.” He gestured to the door. Inviting Kenobi into his own home. “I won’t kill you. Or Luke for that matter...I gave my word.”

Kenobi was surprised at his knowledge of Luke, but hid it away quickly. “You gave your word to whom?” Kenobi asked him calmly. “The Emperor?”

Vader shook his head. “To Rey. Let’s discuss this indoors.”
Kenobi conceded, probably because he knew he didn’t actually have a choice in the matter, and made his way back into his hut. Vader following in after him. Ducking to make it through the doorway. He waved the door shut. They couldn’t afford any listeners. He opened himself up slightly to the Force. Enough to sense anyone and anything within a kilometre radius.

Vader took in Kenobi’s appearance. He was now an old man. The desert life had not been kind to him. “You got old.” He winced from behind his mask. He was awful at small talk. Always had been.

Kenobi raised a single eyebrow. “That’s what happens when everything and everyone you know gets taken from you.”

Vader nodded. The emptiness still haunted him on occasion. When he was feeling particularly conflicted over his actions back when he was not much more than a boy. He usually worked his way through his conflict by throwing himself recklessly at whatever task Sidious gave him.

“The sand and suns couldn’t have helped either.” Vader pointed out dryly. His tone lost in the vocoder.

“What are you doing here, Anakin?” Kenobi asked him tiredly.

Vader jerked. More out of shock than anything else. The use of his birth name didn’t anger him as much as it should have.


Kenobi gave him a single nod. “I first assumed Luke was in trouble...I was mistaken.”

“What do you know of time travel?” Vader asked his former Master.

Kenobi’s eyes grew wide. “Time...time travel?”

“Rey, a young, untrained Force sensitive appeared in a storage closet on my ship. With Anakin Skywalker’s lightsaber.” He gestured to Kenobi. “I assume it wasn’t you who dropped it off on
Kenobi was shocked. He shook his head. “No. I have it here. I am keeping it for Luke to give to him when the time comes.” He frowned. “Could it be a replica? Someone could have made one similar to your old saber...”

Vader shook his head. “It’s no replica. Rey said the Empire will fall. It had already fallen in her time, only to be replaced by another. Another dark force user. Another apprentice as his weapon. My grandson is the weapon in her time.” He watched Kenobi closely. “The son of my daughter, trying to carry out his grandfather’s legacy. He even wiped out the new Jedi Order that Luke created.”

Kenobi rubbed his face with a hand. He tossed his saber down on the table. Sitting down in an old chair. The man was exhausted.

“The Emperor believes the disturbance was from Luke.” Vader dropped the next bombshell. “Somehow he knows of him. Somehow he knows he is, or will be, a Force user. He has given me the task of finding Luke and bringing him to Coruscant. He means to turn him to the dark side.”

“To replace you as his apprentice.” Kenobi supplied.

Vader nodded. “That is what Rey and I believe.”

“And you’ve what... decided it would be more amusing for you to warn me ahead of time. To warn me that you’ll take Luke to your Master right under my nose. On my watch.” Kenobi was angry.

Vader stepped back at the venom in his voice. “No. I am telling you this to get you to hide him. To protect him from the Emperor.”

“What?” Confusion.

“I’m telling you that you, and Luke and his guardians need to get off of this sand pit and hide!” Vader yelled at the man he once knew. “Find a ship...any ship and leave!”
Vader began pacing. His panic was beginning to bleed through his shields. “In Rey’s time, the Emperor didn’t meet Luke until the second Death Star was around...about four years from now. We are thinking that her appearance in this time, may be speeding certain events up.” He stopped his pacing and looked at Kenobi. “I don’t believe I can prolong my search for four years. The Emperor will find someone else to get Luke and bring him to Coruscant.”

“And then what?” Kenobi asked him. “When Luke is trained in the Force, which hasn’t even begun by the way, you’ll take him and deliver him to Palpatine?”

“I don’t know...I don’t think so,” Vader admitted. “I — We haven’t planned ahead that far.”

Kenobi snorted. Snorted. “Now there’s a surprise.”

“Like you were any better.” Vader crossed his arms across his chest. He didn’t like being questioned. Being ridiculed. Being reminded of his past life.

“Why are you doing this, Anakin?” Kenobi asked him quietly.

“I just told you! Are you deaf as well as old?” Vader felt his anger slip through his shields.

Kenobi winced, raising a hand as if to stop the onslaught of Vader’s frustration.

Vader began clenching and unclenching his hands. Trying to calm himself down. That was twice within one standard day. He needed to practice with his droids.

Kenobi lowered his hand to the table. “Thank you.” He told the monster standing awkwardly in his kitchen. “I meant why would you risk this? Palpatine will kill you if he finds out what you are doing.”

Vader looked down to the floor. He felt insecure. Uncertain. Weak. “Rey told me that I killed Palpatine in her time. Before her time, I mean. I kill him, he kills me...but not before my son brought me back to the light.”

“Is that what you want, Anakin?” Kenobi asked him sadly. “Do you wish to return to the light?”
Vader fidgeted uncomfortably. He didn’t know. Didn’t think it was possible for him. After everything he had done. “Rey said...she said that I did. My want is irrelevant.”

Kenobi leaned back in his chair. A contemplative look on his face. “What is this Rey like?”

“She is about Luke’s age, I think. From Jakku...she’s been on her own since she was six years old. A scavenger of crashed Imperial Star Destroyers. Found herself in trouble with the First Order — the Empire in her time. Found herself with the rebels. She wasn’t trained at all when she first arrived here,” Vader told him. “I taught her some shielding to hide herself from the Emperor. She got them in place moments before he got in touch with me via holo.”

Kenobi shook his head in amazement. “She just arrived here a day ago...at most. You’re telling me she has built up shields already.”

Vader nodded. “They aren’t perfect...but she’s a quick learner. Has already been able to do a few other things with the Force...before she arrived here.” He paused. “She is strong in the Force Obi-Wan. Very strong. Very bright...almost blinding.”

“And will you teach her?” Obi-Wan asked him. “Teach her the ways of the Sith?”

Vader shook his head. “She asked to be taught only the light side.”

“And you’re going to respect that? Why?”

Vader hooked his thumbs in his belt. Self-conscious. “Because the Force is insisting that I do so. It is insisting that I must protect her. That she is extremely important.”

“It is dangerous for her to be on your Star Destroyer. Extremely dangerous. For you as well.” He peered up at Vader from his spot at the table. “If anyone were to find out about her...”

“I’d kill them before they’d inform Palpatine.” Vader insisted. “She is my responsibility.” He pointed to his chest.
Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. “That she is...but she is not yours to keep. She is not your possession. If you find your actions — *these* actions — catching up with you and your Master finds out about her, she will need to flee. You will need to let her go, in order to keep her safe.”

Vader stood there in silence as he allowed Obi-Wan’s words to register. He couldn’t get attached...not like he did with Padmé. It would only lead to her death. That was what Obi-Wan was telling him. He needed to learn from his mistakes.

“I won’t get attached.” Vader assured Obi-Wan. “She isn’t Padmé.”

Kenobi nodded tiredly and began to rise from his chair. “I never said she was. I need to pack and get to Luke and his guardians before the sunsets.” He grimaced. “Owen won’t like what I will have to tell him.”

“Owen? Owen Lars? My...stepbrother?” Of course he was Luke’s guardian. He was *technically* family. Vader promised Rey he would only talk to Kenobi. He couldn’t see Luke. Not like this. Not as he was. “You should inform my daughter as well what is going on. I don’t know who she is or where she is hidden, but if Palpatine already knows about Luke he may already know about her.”

He left Kenobi’s hut without waiting for a response and stood facing the Lars homestead. He was close. So close. But he knew he couldn’t visit Luke. The Force was telling him that now wasn’t the correct time to see Luke in the flesh. He needed to be patient. He needed to prepare.

“How much time do we have to leave here?” Kenobi asked from behind him. “I assume you’ll send troopers to carry out a search.”

Vader gave him a nod. “The second sunrise tomorrow. That is all the time I can give you.”

“And if I can’t convince Owen and Beru to flee with Luke and myself by then?”

“Then you take Luke, forcefully if you must, and leave those fools behind.” Vader strolled confidently towards his ship. “You cannot save everyone Obi-Wan.”
Chapter 3

Rey wiped the foggy mirror with her hand after stepping out of the shower and took in her appearance. She had tugged her own clothes back on and was in the process of attempting to comb her sopping wet hair with her fingers when she heard the door to the meditation room open. She grabbed the cloth ties for her buns, left the refresher, and re-entered the room.

Vader was waiting, awkwardly, in the middle of the room, a datapad in his hand.

“I have some images I’d like you to look at to see what you recognize,” Vader said in lieu of a greeting.

Rey raised an eyebrow in response. “Good morning to you too, Lord Vader.” She knew she was being petty, but her head still hurt from his assault on her mind the day before. That, and she had barely gotten any sleep — the seriousness of the situation she was dropped into had kept her wide awake for most of the night.

Vader didn’t respond right away, instead he took a step back from her. Cautious. Unsure. “Good morning,” the vocoder responded. His gloved hand extended forward and handed her the datapad.

“Ships leaving Mos Eisley since yesterday afternoon until the second sunrise there this morning,” Vader explained. “Which one did they leave on?”

“Which one did who leave on?” She wouldn’t give him anything. Afraid she had already said too much. She had second guessed every single thing she told him the day prior. Afraid that once he learned all he could from her, he’d dispose of her by throwing her out with the waste.


Rey was shocked. How would she know? “This is different from how it happened in my time.” She held up a hand. “And I don’t even know how they managed that.” Although, she did have a pretty good idea. “Why do you need to know? The less you know, the better.”

Vader’s fist clenched and unclenched. He breathing apparatus the only sound. He placed his hands on his hips. “Why would you think that? Yesterday you informed me on numerous things from the future. What has changed?”
“A night of rest. That’s what.” Rey looked down at the datapad, there were over two hundred images taken. “As soon as you learn enough, you’ll have no need for me. You’ll stuff me in a trash compactor and throw me out with the rest of the garbage.”

“No.”

Rey nodded. “Yes. You know it’s true… there’s no need to lie to me.”

Vader stepped forward, closer to Rey. “It is not true. I informed you already that I will protect you, Rey. I will do that until my last breath. Nothing will change that. Nothing.”

The truth rang out in the Force. It had been quiet as soon as Vader left for his meeting with Kenobi the day prior and had stayed silent until this moment. Rey was terrified that she had made the wrong decision telling him where Kenobi was hiding. Where Luke was living.

“I wish to know the ship they left on only to keep track of them. Only to make sure they are not harmed,” Vader explained. “I have just ordered troopers down to the surface to carry out a search of the planet. I know they will eventually learn of Owen and Beru Lars and their adopted boy Luke Lars. I just wanted to make sure they were off planet in time. That is all.”

Rey shook her head. “His name isn’t Luke Lars. It’s Luke Skywalker… his guardians insisted that he have his father’s last name.” She sat down in the middle of the room and turned her focus to the datapad in her hand. “The ship they left on may not be on here, you have to understand that. You cannot get angry at me if I say that I don’t know.” She grimaced as she felt her blood pounding in her head. “My head still hurts from yesterday. I’ve had barely any sleep. And I am feeling far too emotional and exhausted to have to deal with you if things don’t go your way.”

Vader slowly sat down next to her. “I understand.”

“I would also like to know what is going on,” Rey insisted turning to look at Vader. “I need to know just what the Empire is doing. What you are doing. Where we are. I cannot warn you of events if I don’t know what is going on. It is pivotal that I know of certain things.”

“I agree.” Vader pointed to the datapad in her hand. “I will inform you of as much as I can. But you need to look at these images of the ships fleeing Mos Eisley.”
Rey sighed in response and began flicking through the images. It was alarming just how detailed the images were given how far away most of the ships were from the Destroyer. The cameras on Vader’s Star Destroyer were obviously the highest quality available.

She flicked and flicked. Nothing was jumping out at her. On image 159 she let out an involuntary gasp. It was the *Millennium Falcon*.

Han Solo was here.

Vader leaned over to take a closer look. “That piece of garbage. That’s what they flew out on?”

“She’s got it where it counts,” Rey informed Vader. She sniffed. Wiped at a tear that had slid down her cheek. She could feel Vader’s gaze on her. His confusion as to why she was crying was seeping through his shields. “That ship did the Kessel Run in less than twelve parsecs.” She said quietly, looking over at Vader sitting beside her. “That is your future son-in-law’s ship.”

Surprise and understanding bled through Vader’s shields. He continued to watch Rey for a moment before turning his attention back to the datapad in her hands.

Vader took the datapad from her and began to search the general specs for the freighter. “It must have been customized,” he told Rey. “Just how safe is it for Luke and my daughter on that ship?” Worry hummed in the Force.

Rey grinned, he was worried about his children. “It’s the best, most recognized ship out there. At least in my time. It is legendary.” She paused, unsure if she should share more. She settled on her experience flying the *Falcon*. “It’s the ship me and Finn escaped Jakku with. I stole it from Plutt, he had put some horrible modifications on it.” She shook her head at Plutt’s incompetence. “TIE Fighters were after us because of BB-8. I flew it through the Starship Graveyard, through the *Ravager*.”

Vader looked at her. Pride seeping through his shields. “Finn was another scavenger on Jakku with you? A… friend?”

Rey shook her head. “No. Finn is a former stormtrooper. He defected. He lied to me...said he was with the resistance when I knocked him on his ass at Niima Outpost.” She paused. “But, yes...he is a friend.”
Vader nodded and placed his hands on his lap. “I have been ordered to look for the son of Anakin Skywalker. This task takes precedence over everything else, until the Emperor decides otherwise. I understand now why the Emperor found out about Luke. Skywalker as a last name was a foolish decision. Kenobi wouldn’t have agreed with that.”

“From my understanding, he had very little say in anything to do with Luke. His guardians did not want Obi-Wan around him,” Rey told him quietly. “I’m not entirely sure why. My General said he was referred to as the ‘crazy old hermit’. That Owen Lars saw him as a bad influence. Saw him as someone who tore apart families.”

Vader shook his head. “It wasn’t Obi-Wan who did that.” He paused, hesitant. “Luke has the Skywalker name...does your General as well?”

Rey shook her head. “She has the last name of her adoptive parents.”

Vader gave a curt nod of his head. “Good. She is hidden better from myself and the Emperor. I assume she is on another Outer Rim planet.”

Rey just looked at Vader and raised a solitary eyebrow. “It would be logical to assume that.” A non-answer. Neither confirming or denying his assumption.

Vader watched her closely before tossing her a ration bar as he stood up from his spot on the ground next to Rey. “Breakfast.” He gestured for her to stand up.

Rey got to her feet, clutching her food tightly. She didn’t understand what was going on.

“Turn around. Back towards me.”

Rey spun around, facing the wall.

“Close your eyes.”
Her eyes shut tightly.

Movement from behind her. Rustling. A brush of something cold on her right earlobe. A metal finger. Vader had taken off his gloves.

Her hair began to be separated.

“Repeat after me,” Vader said to her as he began tugging on a small section of her hair. “There is no emotion, there is peace.”

“There is no emotion, there is peace.” Rey’s voice was quiet.

More tugging.

“There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.”

“There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.” Rey’s voice became stronger, realizing just what Vader was getting her to recite.

“There is no passion, there is serenity.” Vader’s vocoder rang out.

Rey swallowed nervously. “There is no passion, there is serenity.”

“There is no chaos, there is harmony.” More tugging of her hair.

Rey winced at a particularly hard tug. “There is no chaos, there is harmony.”

Vader finished whatever he was doing to her hair. He gave it a sharp tug causing her to take a step back right into his chest. “There is no death, there is the Force.” He bent down to say it right in her ear.
“There is no death, there is the Force.” Rey finished. She shivered.

“The Jedi Code, young Rey. Remember it, understand what it means.” Vader stepped away from her. “You will work on your shields for today. Attempt to build up their complexity. Their layers. I will test them later. Meditation is a must today as well. I will be in and out of my quarters all day due to the search on Tatooine.” He paused. “I will attempt to find an appropriate time to begin your lightsaber training.”

“You will give me back my lightsaber?” Rey couldn’t keep the hope out of her tone. She blinked open her eyes, turning to look at Vader as he moved towards the doorway.

Her turned back to look at her. “It would be logical to assume that.” Vader left the room, tugging his gloves back on as he went.

Rey carefully touched the section of her hair that Vader was tugging on as he recited the Jedi Code.

He had given her a traditional Padawan braid.

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Vader made his way from the command center of his ship towards his quarters to check on his... Padawan. He had just observed his troopers open fire on Owen and Beru Lars. His foolish stepbrother had reached for a troopers weapon. His foolish stepbrother had intentionally gotten himself and his wife killed. His foolish stepbrother had stayed behind instead of fleeing with Luke and Kenobi.

Vader didn’t understand why.

He waved his quarters door open and walked over to the entrance of his meditation chambers. Pausing to check how Rey was. If she was in the middle of a meditation he needed to be cautious. He didn’t wish to alarm her.

He sent out subtle feelers to check. Pausing when he found only a muted signature of Rey in the Force. She had shielded herself almost entirely from him. Good.
Vader entered into his meditation chambers, stopping when he spotted Rey sound asleep, huddled underneath a blanket amongst Padmé’s pillows that he had taken from her home.

He quirked his head to the side. It was the perfect opportunity to check on her shields, he did warn her that he would. Kneeling down, Vader reached out for Rey’s head and carefully entered her mind. It was almost instant, as he knew it would be.

A flash of bright light. He was standing on a desert planet.

“Come back!” A little girl cried out. Vader spun around to look at her. She was tiny. Reaching for the sky. Vader followed her line of sight. A ship was leaving the planet.

“Quiet, girl.” A creature responded to the little girl. Tugging hard on her arm, trying to pull her with him.

Vader took a closer look at the little girl. She had three little buns in her hair. Rey. The little girl was Rey.

Vader turned back towards the sky. The ship was leaving the atmosphere. It was gone. He turned back to look at the little Rey, tears were running down her cheeks. I’ve been looking after myself since I was six.

Her parents had left her on Jakku.

The scene changed, he was now in a darker room. An older Rey was scratching a mark into a wall. A tally. Keeping count of something. Waiting. Longing. Wasted time.

A flash of light.

Rey running through a forest somewhere. Terrified. Vader’s heart was racing in response to Rey’s fear. She made her way around a rock formation before a masked being with a blood red saber stepped in front of her. Kylo Ren.
Vader jerked back along with Rey into another memory.

“You need a teacher!” Kylo Ren wielding the red saber, now maskless, was yelling at Rey. “I can show you the ways of the Force!” Red and blue lightsabers clashing. Blinding light.

Green. Nothing but green foliage. Rey was hurrying up some stone steps. She paused once she reached the top of the hill. Someone was standing with their back towards Rey. A man in a cloak. The man turned around. Vader turned to look at Rey. She was extending her arm towards the man. Her lightsaber in her hand. Offering it to the bearded man. Vader turned to look closer at the unknown man. Piercing blue eyes stared back. His eyes. Anakin’s eyes. *Luke.*

Bright light. Blinding light. Pressure in his head. Vader closed his eyes tightly. Something was wrong.

“Something wonderful has happened.” A voice he only heard now in his dreams echoed in his ears. “Ani, I’m pregnant.”

Vader’s eyes shot open. Rey was standing directly in front of him. A glare on her face and her hands on her hips.

“How sweet.” She sneered at him. “Now tell me how to get out of your head, *Ani.* And you stay out of mine.”

Vader took a step back in shock.

“Wake up,” Vader told Rey. “You need to pull back and wake up. Pull into yourself.” He took another step away from Rey. “I’ll pull out of your mind at the same time.”

He pulled out of Rey’s mind and found himself back in his meditation room kneeling before Rey.

She whacked him hard on the mask with a pillow.

“How dare you!” Rey growled as she stood over Vader. Fluffy pillow in hand.
Vader was rattled. No one had gotten into his mind in *years*. Not even his Master.

*Sidious.*

Rey was fuming. Her anger was blasting against Vader. Her hurt. Her pain.

Her shields were severely damaged. Weakened by Vader’s invasion of her mind.

He was foolish. An idiot.

He held up his hand, stopping the second pillow to his face. “Stop,” he barked out. “Rey...you need to stop. You need to rebuild your shields.” He tipped his head back to look up at Rey before standing up and towering over her.

“You need to rebuild them right now!” Vader reached for Rey, trying to be her ground. The anchor for her to hold onto as she repaired her shields.

“Please, Rey. You must.” Vader begged her. “We will both be killed if you don’t repair them right now.” Vader watched as she began to realize the seriousness of the situation he had put them both in.

“Please,” he repeated once more.

Rey clamped her eyes shut and grasped onto his hand that was holding her shoulder.

He felt her begin to pull back. Begin to hide. He felt her walls being thrown back up. Something thick being slapped together in haste. He felt her anger disappear behind her wall. He felt her hate for him dissipate. Leaving behind disappointment and pain and fear. He had betrayed her trust, taken advantage of her when she was at her most vulnerable.

“Just a bit more, Rey,” he said encouragingly to her. “You’re almost there.”
Rey’s lip quivered. “I can’t...I can’t do it. I feel like they’re about to shatter as soon as I put more inside.” She opened her eyes and peered up at Vader. “Help me...please help me. I’m not ready for him.” She moved his hand and placed it on the side of her head. “I’m not ready…” Tears slid down her cheeks. An older version of the little girl left behind in the desert.

Vader hesitated for only a moment before slipping back into her mind. Rey’s mind now had a thick, sand plaster wall in place.

*This isn’t good enough, Rey. Vader thought quietly. Sand is weak. You need a wall of something stronger. A stronger material.*

*Like what?* Rey thought back. Her voice was muted; barely audible. Unsure how to communicate with someone via thoughts.

*I have an idea. If you don’t like it, we can change it later.* He sent the memory of her scratching the tally marks into the wall.

Rey nodded her head once against his hand. *Do it.*

Together they built her a newer, stronger wall around her sand plaster one. Together they tucked away her emotions. Her disappointment, pain, and her crippling fear of the Emperor.

*Better?* Vader thought carefully.

Another nod against his hand.

He pulled out of her mind and found himself standing in front of Rey in his meditation chambers.

“Why did you do that?” Rey murmured quietly. “Those memories were none of your business. They belong to me. Not anyone else.”

“I did warn you I would be checking your shields.” It sounded weak, before Vader even said it aloud. He was still shocked that Rey was able to get into his mind; able to see his most private memories.
He wasn’t angry, he realized. For the first time in a long time, he wasn’t actually angry. He was cautious. Concerned. Rey had done something that should have been impossible for her.

And she had done it before, to his own grandson, with even less training in the Force.

“Are you going to kill me now?” Rey’s question brought him back to the present.

Vader took a step back. “What?” He didn’t understand her question.

“Are you going to kill me now?” Rey repeated. “You told me that if I ever got into your mind you’d kill me, because no one gets in. Ever.”

Vader shook his head. “No...I won’t kill you.”

No. He wanted to train her. He wanted to see what she could do once she had been trained by him. He wanted to see just how powerful she really was. Her power...together they could...

No. Stop.

She wouldn’t. She wasn’t like him. She was far too...good. He couldn’t — wouldn’t — ask that of her. She didn’t want to rule the galaxy with him.

He didn’t even want to rule the galaxy. Not really. That was what the Emperor wanted. What his master wanted. Vader was just his enforcer. His weapon. His monster.

He had no other choice.

Fool. You always had a choice. You chose the dark side, remember?

Idiot.
“I would like to teach you the ways of the Force,” Vader said to her calmly. He didn’t want to scare her again. He didn’t want to hurt her. “The light side of the Force...if you still wish to be taught by me.”

“Why?” Rey asked him, confused. “I...broke into your mind…”

Vader gave her a nod. “After I broke into yours. I think your reaction was fair. Justified.” He hesitated, not knowing how to say what he wanted to say to her. “I shouldn’t have gone into your mind. I destroyed your shields. Your walls. I saw memories that were private.” He looked down at the floor. “You are my Padawan, not my enemy. I forgot that important fact.”

Rey gave him a cautious look. “You cannot keep forgetting that. It hurts when you do so.” She rubbed her head. She hesitated. “Did you have any questions about what you saw in my mind?”

“Jakku…” Vader didn’t even know what it was that he wanted to ask.

Rey looked down at her feet. Nodding her head. “I didn’t remember that until I touched your lightsaber. I had forgotten that they had flown away and left me with Unkar Plutt. Sold me.” She grimaced. “They sold me to Plutt.” She frowned. “I always believed that they were on a trip...a dangerous voyage somewhere and would be coming back for me when they finished it. That was what the tally marks were for. Counting the days I spent waiting for them.”

“That was how you coped.” Vader supplied. “It was how your six year old mind coped with being sold to someone.” He knew all about that coping mechanism. Saw it when he was a little boy on Tatooine.

Vader hesitated once more. “The memory with Kylo Ren...wearing his mask. Was that...was that...real?”

Rey frowned. “Yes.” She swallowed. “The first one was on Takodana...when he captured me. The one without the mask was on Starkiller Base right after he had murdered his own father.”

“And the last one, before you slipped into my mind, was Luke.” Vader’s mind was racing. He had seen his son. Older than he was today, absolutely. But he had still been able to see his face.

“The Luke Skywalker I met who was in hiding, yes.” Rey told him. “I had heard stories about him, his legend, on Jakku. The Jedi Knight who had defeated the Emperor and Darth Vader on the second Death Star. The Jedi Knight who had somehow made an impossible shot and destroyed the first Death Star.” She looked up at Vader standing before her. “I never learned of him bringing you back to the light until my General told me. They had kept your relation to them quiet for years.”

Rey grimaced. “My General...she had been...the Senate. Politicians.” She settled on. “Someone had leaked it. That she was the daughter of Darth Vader. That she was a warmonger. An unstable fanatic.” She frowned to herself. “So she became the leader of the Resistance. My General. The first person, and, I believe the only person at that time, who realized what the remnants of the Empire were doing out in the Outer Rim...in the Unknown Regions. Then the First Order came out of there. Corrupted her son and eventually stole him from his family.”

Of course his choices came back to bite his children in the ass. His actions. He destroyed things. That was what he was good at. Destroying everything.

The Senate...

He focused on Rey standing before him. “She’s on the Senate? My daughter...she’s a politician?” Like her mother.

Rey grimaced once more. Realizing Vader had noticed her slip up. “I’m not sure if she is actually on the Senate today. Right now.”

“But...”

“But...she might be...I don’t know,” Rey admitted quietly. “I can’t tell you who she is. I will eventually, but today I can’t.” She was looking up at Vader, pleading with him.

Vader nodded. He would have to learn patience.
“You must tell me when the Emperor sends you to Scarif.” Rey insisted. “When he sends you to go after the rebels.” She stepped towards Vader. “In my time...in my history...your daughter is among them. You kill all the rebels and capture her.”

“This was when I tortured her.” It was strange to think of something in the past-tense when, for him, it hadn’t even happened yet.

Rey nodded. “Yes.” She frowned to herself. Hesitating. “Please don’t do that this time.”

Vader scoffed. His vocoder unable to pick it up. “I won’t...I don’t wish to harm her.”

Rey nodded at his response, but didn’t comment.

An awkward silence ensued.

Vader didn’t know what to say to the girl. He fidgeted with his gloves before hooking his thumbs back into his belt.

“Did...did you just come here to check on my shields?”

Vader blinked. Why had he come here? The Lars.

He shook his head. “No. My soldiers found Beru and Owen Lars.” He paused. “They were shot and killed by the troopers after Owen reached for one of their weapons.”

Rey gave him a curt nod of her head. Sickened from the unnecessary death. Far too good to rule the galaxy with Vader by her side.

He needed to remember that.

Rey swallowed. “They were killed in my past. Their deaths were what got Luke off of Tatooine.”
“How?”

Rey frowned. “Killed by troopers, I think.”

*Ordered by him,* she didn’t need to say to Vader. He knew himself well enough to know exactly what his other self would have done. He would have eliminated every trace of his past life.

Vader turned around to leave the room once more. He felt uncomfortable with himself. *Unclean.* He had, at one point or another, tortured his own daughter and ordered his stepbrother and his wife to be slaughtered.

Rey was forcing him to question everything he knew. *Thought* he knew.

He took a step towards the entrance.

“She was very beautiful.” Rey’s voice was quiet. Cautious.

Vader looked down at the floor. Pausing for only a moment. “Yes...she was.”
“There are seven combat forms that you’ll need to learn when wielding my — *your* lightsaber.”

After almost three weeks of trying to figure out the best possible time to begin teaching Rey how to wield a lightsaber properly, Vader had woken Rey up at two o’clock in the morning to begin her training. They were sitting cross legged in the middle of Vader’s training room, facing each other as he began to teach Rey the theory behind the different combat forms.

“The first form, Shii-Cho or Form I, is the oldest and most basic of the forms,” Vader began explaining to Rey. “It is what the Jedi Order started off teaching the younglings when they first came to the temple in my time.”

Rey nodded, hiding a yawn behind her hand.

“While it is incredibly simple by today’s standards, it is the building block from which each of the other forms of combat is developed.” Vader paused, allowing Rey to comprehend what he was saying. “Shii-Cho focuses on the various zones: the head, right arm and side, left arm and side, the back, the right leg, and zone six — the left leg. It also focuses on victory without injury — so disarming rather than killing or injuring your opponent.”

Rey nodded slowly, wondering just how aiming for someone’s head was disarming rather than killing.

“Form II, or Makashi, focuses on lightsaber-to-lightsaber dueling. It is identifiable from its precision and efficiency. Users of this form can defend themselves with minimal effort, in comparison to Shii-Cho. The key point of this form of combat is to avoid being disarmed.” Vader paused, watching Rey closely. “Make sense so far?”

Rey nodded once more. “Form II was developed in response to Form I, I assume?”

“Yes.” Vader nodded. “Soresu, or Form III, is strictly defensive. It is used to deflect blaster fire, block aggressive lightsaber attacks...that kind of thing. A formidable master of Soresu will use this form to bring the fight to where they want it to be; somewhere beneficial to them. They will use this form in response to the more aggressive attacks, waiting until their opponent tires out and begins to make mistakes. Begins to get sloppy. Once this occurs, the Soresu master will attack and
eventually defeat their opponent.”

Rey feeling as though he wished to say more on this form of combat, waited for him to continue. She quirked her head at Vader sitting before her. There was something he wasn’t saying.

Vader looked down at his hands in his lap. “Obi-Wan Kenobi is a master of this form.”

Rey’s eyebrows rose in surprise, thinking about what Vader had just told her about this style of fighting. “It’s how he defeated you before...how he put you in your suit.” She gestured at him. “You got sloppy. Tired out. He took advantage of that.”

Vader responded with a slight nod. “I was also half out of my mind...so he had the advantage there.”

Rey frowned. “Why were you ‘half out of your mind’?”

Vader tipped his helmet to look directly at Rey. “I had just led the assault on the temple, slaughtered the Jedi and the children present, pledged my allegiance to Darth Sidious, killed the separatists on Mustafar, and Force choked my wife to death.” He stared at Rey, watching her reaction. “Do you think I was perfectly sane during all of that?”

Rey tried to swallow, her throat tight. She shook her head. “No.” She shivered at his bluntness. His cool detachment. She frowned, remembering something Leia had said to her. “Padmé didn’t die on Mustafar…”

Vader nodded. “Perhaps not...but, I did kill her. Choked her to death. Sidious told me she died from the injuries that I inflicted on her. Because I lost control. Because I lost my mind.”

Rey shook her head once more. “No...that’s not what...I heard differently.”

“What do you mean?” Vader was confused. “What did you hear?”

Rey hesitated. “My General told me that her adoptive parents told her that she died on an asteroid. *Polis Massa*. That Obi-Wan had told them she died on Polis Massa, but not from her injuries. She
just...gave birth...and then... died. There was nothing actually wrong with her. She just...lost her will to live. My General’s parents told her that her birth mother died of a broken heart,” she finished quietly. She scratched at her leggings and soft tunic that SD-2826 had provided her for sleepwear.

Vader didn’t respond to Rey. Instead just continued to look at her. His breathing apparatus forcing him to continue inhaling and exhaling.

Rey looked down at her lap. Scratched at her leggings some more. Self-conscious.

“Oh.”

Rey could feel the anguish radiating off of Vader in front of her. She could feel his pain. His sorrow. His regret. She cautiously looked back up at Vader. He was looking at his gloved hands. Looking over to the far wall. Looking at anything but his Padawan in front of him.

“I think...I think it’s best if we end your lesson for today,” he said cautiously to Rey. Still refusing to look at her. He stood up and held out his hand to help her back onto her feet. “I’ll walk you back to your room.”

Rey placed her hand in his and was pulled to her feet by Vader. The two made their way down the hallway and towards Vader’s quarters. Stepping inside, Vader tugged her towards the meditation room. He hadn’t said a word since leaving the training facility.

Waving the door open, Vader gestured for Rey to enter. “Get some rest...and make sure your shields are tight.” He turned around to leave his quarters without waiting for a response. “They need to be strong tonight, Rey. Don’t leave your room for anything.”

Rey frowned, she had never left her room without him escorting her somewhere. She stepped cautiously into her makeshift bedroom. Unsure about what she had just witnessed. The meditation room door snapped shut, locking her in for the night. The subtle lighting highlighting the way towards her pillow bed. Rey nestled in her makeshift bed and began testing her walls. Her shields. She built another solid metal wall just to be sure she was safe for the night. Vader’s statement to her worried her greatly. She had felt his control slipping as they made their way from the training room. His emotions were beginning to breakdown his own walls. His own shields.

Rey felt as they began to crumble. His regret rang strongest, pushing hard against Rey.
She curled tighter in her bed. Under her blanket.

Vader’s anger came next. Anger directed entirely at himself.

Tears began to pour out of Rey. She clutched her head in her hands, trying to hide away. Overwhelmed from Vader’s emotions.

She gasped, taking in as much air as she could.

She prodded at her own shields, making sure they were still standing. Vader hadn’t destroyed them. They were still entirely intact.

Rey sobbed as Vader’s heartbreak blasted against her shields. His pain. His devastation.

“What have I done?” She wailed to the empty room, her voice sounding strange. Unlike her own. Tears continued running down her cheeks.

She took another deep breath. She was having a difficult time breathing. Vader was too overwhelming.

*Hate.*

Vader’s hate was now blasting against Rey. His hate for himself. His hate for the Emperor. His drive to kill. He was going to kill Palpatine. Slaughter him. Rip him apart, limb by limb.

Muffled sound ran through Rey’s ears. Mechanical breathing filled the room. Rey poked her head out from underneath her blanket and shot up onto her feet. Vader was on his knees on the floor in the middle of the room, his head cradled in his arms. She hadn’t heard him come in. Hadn’t heard the door open.

He was unaware she was right in front of him. Unaware of his surroundings.
“Vade... Anakin?” Rey hissed. Terrified she would set him off even more.

His head shot up from his hands. “How did you get in?” He barked. “I told you to stay in your room.”

“I am in my room.” Rey insisted. “You’re the one who came into my room...why are you here? I can barely keep my shields up...you need to get away from me.”

Vader shook his head. “I’m not in your room.” He slowly stood up from his spot on the floor. Helmet quirked to the side.

Rey’s mind was racing. She didn’t understand. How could both she and him be in two places at once?

She rubbed at her face. Her hand came back dry.

She looked down at her hand in shock. She had been crying only seconds ago. Sobbing.

“I don’t...I don’t understand...” she looked back up to ask Vader just what was going on.

Her room was empty, save for her.

“What?” Rey stood in the center of her room. Awkward. Lost. Confused. She curled her arms around herself. Self-conscious about what she had just experienced. What she had just witnessed.

She was going mad. Losing her sanity. Of that she was certain.

She sat back down on her pillow bed, wrapping the blanket around herself. Trying to figure out what just happened.

She couldn’t feel Vader anymore. He had obviously rebuilt his walls. His shields. She tested her own walls once more. They were still holding strong. Firm in her mind.
She exhaled slowly. Her mind was calm. Confused, but she no longer felt like she was about to drown in emotion.

_Vader’s emotions_, the Force whispered in her ear. _Anakin’s tears_.

“I don’t understand,” she murmured to the empty room.

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Rey awoke to the sound of people speaking just outside her door. A Holocall.

_The Emperor._

_Checking in on his weapon. His monster._

He too had felt Vader breakdown. Had known that something was wrong with his most loyal soldier.

_Rey was certain the entire galaxy had felt Vader’s pain. His regret. His hate for the Emperor. For himself._

She shivered as she sat up in her bed. Pulling her blanket around herself as she waited for the call to end. Space was cold. Freezing when compared to Jakku. It was something Rey was sure she would never get used to. The chill of space travel.

_Testing her shields, making sure they were continuing to hide her presence from Palpatine, Rey got comfortable on her bed and began her breathing exercises. Knowing full well that Vader would check in with her as soon as the call was finished._

_They needed to discuss what they had both experienced the night before._
Rey knew that Masters and their Padawan did, in fact, form a bond with one another. Vader had warned her that the two of them would eventually know when the other was in trouble. After some time they would be able to have an idea about what the other was thinking. More out of knowing one another extremely well, rather than reading one’s mind. Eventually, if they continued to work together, Vader informed Rey that they could battle together against a common enemy and walk away practically unscathed. Together, if they allowed their bond to develop, they would be almost unstoppable.

However, this thing that she and Vader had was so much more than that. It had to be. They had... appeared to each other from different locations. Vader’s emotions felt like her own. Rey had felt his tears splash down her cheeks as if they were her own. Anakin’s tears.

It had only been a few weeks since Rey first appeared on this ship. A few weeks since she had met the Jedi Killer in the flesh. A few weeks since she had begun to learn about the man underneath all of the armour.

There hadn’t been enough time to develop that intense of a bond with one another. There was no way this bond that they shared was possible. It shouldn’t exist.

Rey focused back on her breathing. Inhaling. Exhaling. She needed to be calm for when they would meditate together.

She’d wait for Vader to come and talk to her about what this was. Surely he’d know what was going on. He used to be a Jedi Knight. He was now a Sith Lord. He would know something. He had to.

The conversation outside her room ended.

Rey waited anxiously for Vader to fill her in on what was going on.

Inhaling.

Exhaling.

The door slid open. Vader standing on the other side. Hesitating before he made his way into the room.
“What...what time is it?” Rey asked him to break the silence.

Vader sat down in front of her on the foliage floor. “Early. It is still somewhat early in the day. I believe you’ve been asleep for only a few hours.”

Rey nodded, clutching her blanket around herself. She frowned.

“Please tell me you know what happened last night.” She looked at Vader with wide eyes. “I think I’m going mad.”

Vader shook his head. “You’re not.” A pause. “At least...I don’t believe so.”

Rey nodded once more. “What happened?”

Vader looked down at his hands in his lap. “I believe we have bonded in a... strange way.”

“But...you said that would take years. Years for us to bond like a master and Padawan.” Rey crossed her arms across her chest. “It’s been a few weeks. It doesn’t make any sense.”

Vader shrugged. “It’s the only explanation I can think of. I’ve been up all night researching bonds. Force bonds.” He tilted his helmet, looking at Rey. “I don’t understand it myself.”

Rey pointed her finger at the man in front of her. “It’s more than that. I felt your tears running down my face — don’t bother denying it, I know it happened.” She waved off his rebuttal. “I felt every single emotion from you last night. Your pain. Anger. Hate. Your heartbreak. Devastation. Regret. I felt it all.” She scrunched her eyebrows together. “I peeked out from under my blanket and you were kneeling in my room before me. Unaware of anything around you.” She shook her head at her Master. “You never said Master-Padawan bonds included temporary... teleportation!”

She was getting hysterical. She needed to calm down.

Vader watched her as she began her controlled breathing in an attempt to calm herself down.
“Which is why I said we’ve bonded in a *strange* way.” Vader deadpanned.

“Seriously?” Rey raised a single eyebrow in annoyance.

Vader shrugged once more. “I will keep researching bonds. There is not much else I can do. I cannot ask Sidious. Kenobi probably doesn’t know any more than I do. There is no one else I can ask about their knowledge on bonds.”

Rey grimaced. Scrunching her eyes shut.

“Who?”

Rey blinked a single eye open. Vader watching her closely. “Yoda,” she whispered. Closing her eyes once more.

“Of course he is still alive.” Vader’s disdain was apparent even with his vocoder. “Don’t bother worrying yourself about where he is. He is not my concern. I won’t be asking him about our bond.”

“Why not?” Rey opened her eyes, trying to get a read on the Sith Lord in front of her.

“Because I slaughtered all of his Jedi and brought his Order to its knees. I destroyed everything he held dear.” He paused, clearly thinking about the former Grand Master of the Jedi Order. “He is exceptionally powerful, as he should be. He’d probably kill me before I got a word out to ask what he knew of Force bonds.” He reached out to grasp Rey’s hands with his own. “In light of our...*bond* together, I am attempting to refrain from getting too emotional. I would appreciate it if you could do the same for me.”

Rey nodded. “Of course. I apologize for my...*feelings* just now. My anxiety.”

Vader waved off her concern. “It is understandable.” He tugged on her hands. “We should meditate some more. You need to become more comfortable with it.”
“But...what did the Emperor say to you?” Rey asked him, pulling her hands away from Vader’s. “He had to have felt your...emotions. Your breakdown.”

Vader nodded. “He checked in. Made sure I hadn’t decided to lead a coup against him. Nothing out of the ordinary.” He shrugged. “He asked how my search for Luke was going. I informed him that I have begun searching for him and Obi-Wan on various planets that he has a history on.”

Rey frowned. “Is that what we are doing right now? Travelling to other planets that Obi-Wan has been to before?”

Vader nodded once. “We’ve just left Naboo’s atmosphere. The first place we went when I was still a child.” He paused. “I sent down a handful of stormtroopers to do a cursory search for Obi-Wan and Luke. No one was injured, or killed for that matter. We are now heading to Dallenor.”

Rey frowned, she had never heard of the planet before now. “What’s on Dallenor?”

Vader shrugged. “Probably nothing. It was the second planet Kenobi and I visited on behalf of the Jedi Order. After we do a search there we will travel to Carnelion IV for a quick check. Although I already know Kenobi won’t be there — it is a war torn planet with a sea of poisonous gas on the surface.”

“Then...why are you looking for him and Luke there?” Rey was confused.

Vader quirked his helmet, watching Rey. “Because it was the third planet the two of us visited for the Jedi Order.” Rey could feel his grin behind his mask.

Rey snorted. “You are making it obvious where you are searching for Kenobi and Luke. Hoping that Obi-Wan will see the pattern.”

Vader nodded. “We visited a lot of planets together. I am attempting to delay Luke meeting Sidious as much as I can.” He shrugged. “I am making as much noise as I can when we search these places in order for the Rebels to pick up on it. I assume Obi-Wan and Luke are already with them, or will be soon.”

Rey nodded slowly, it was a likely assumption. “You don’t wish for Luke to fall to the dark side like you? To rule beside you?” She couldn’t keep the hope out of her voice.
Vader looked down at his hands in his lap. “I don’t know. I do know that I do not want Sidious anywhere near him. I do know that he would destroy the person my son is in order to create a new apprentice. In order to replace me.” He paused, wrestling with his thoughts. “I want Luke beside me, yes, along with my daughter. But I do not know in what capacity. I do not wish to rule the galaxy. I do not wish to be Emperor. I have no patience for imbeciles. No mind for politics.” He shrugged. “I am unsure where I stand. You’ve forced me to reassess my beliefs.”

“Fair enough,” Rey said quietly. She placed her hands in Vader’s. Exhaling slowly as she did so.

It was time to begin their morning ritual. It was time to meditate.

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It had been almost a week before Rey and Vader returned to the training room. He had completely destroyed it during his breakdown after learning just how his wife had died. It had taken the maintenance droids a couple of days to repair the room back to the way it was before.

“Must we do this in the middle of the night?” Rey asked, yawning loudly as she stepped into the room. Her hair was tied back in her usual three buns, with her Padawan braid tucked in the middle bun. She had on snug fitting clothing, suitable for training.

“I do, surprisingly, have other responsibilities,” Vader said to her as he reached for her lightsaber on his belt. He reached out his hand, offering it to Rey.

“Thank you,” Rey said quietly as she clutched the hilt of her saber close to her chest. “So...does this mean we’re gonna jump right in and try to kill each other?”

Vader took his own saber off of his belt, quirking his helmet as he registered what she had just said. “I was planning on training you on your form. I wished to see how you fight.” A pause. “But if you wish to die…”

Rey snorted. “Not happening.” She waved him off. “I’ve never fought before with this thing without fighting for my life. What if I hurt you...by accident, I mean. What if I catch you off guard and you lose a limb?”
Vader stepped closer to her. “You won’t catch me off guard.” He adjusted her grip on the hilt and took a few steps back.

Rey looked down at her grip, taking note of the way her hands were positioned. “What if you catch me off guard? What if I lose a limb?”

“I will just defend against you. Soresu.” Vader commented. “I promise.” He adjusted something on his own lightsaber hilt.

He hadn’t actually answered her question. Rey frowned. She huffed and gave him a curt nod. Nervous. She pressed the button and her saber came to life. A comforting hum in her ear. A blue glow accenting the room.

Vader responded by igniting his own lightsaber holding it low, off to the side in a relaxed position.

Rey wasn’t fooled. His stance was deceptive on purpose. She glared at him, twirling her saber in her hand.

She charged Vader. Her theoretical knowledge of the different combat forms completely forgotten.

Their sabers clashed. Rey’s teeth vibrating as their blades sputtered in anger. Vader pushed her back slightly with the Force.

“The con for being aggressive in your attack, Rey, is that if your opponent is stronger than you — physically stronger — they will be able to withstand your attack for much longer. You will tire out. You will make mistakes.” He twisted his lightsaber around, disengaging them before taking a step away from Rey. “Your past life on Jakku is a hindrance for you right now. You’ll need to get into peak physical condition to be able to channel the Force properly.”

Rey huffed. She was in shape. Repelling and climbing on crashed Destroyers was incredibly difficult. Fighting off greedy, lonely travellers at Niima Outpost was nothing to shrug at. She couldn’t afford to become lax while on Jakku. She wouldn’t become lax here either.

She had learned that lesson when she was twelve.
Rey twirled her lightsaber again. Glaring at her opponent as he waited patiently for her to come at him once more.

She stepped towards Vader, their lightsabers clashing once more. They parried for a few minutes, Vader reacting to all of Rey’s moves without hesitation. He barely moved while he constantly fought off her attack.

She couldn’t hit him at all with her blade. No matter how hard she tried, his own saber was there to block her.

Rey huffed in annoyance. Frustrated that she couldn’t get the drop on him. She growled at him as she twirled her blade, spinning around as she did so.

A sharp burning piercing her side.

Rey swore colourfully in Huttese. Spinning back around to face Vader, clutching at her side.

Vader had hit her with his saber. Burned her through her shirt.

“Do not leave yourself open. I could have sliced you in half right then.” Vader lectured her. Amusement leaching through his shields.

Rey sniffed angrily, her eyes were still watering from the burn. Glaring up at the mask of Vader. “Karking sleemo!” She could feel Vader’s grin from behind his mask. He was enjoying this far too much.

“Do you wish to continue?” Vader queried as he twirled his own lightsaber. “Or have I hurt you too much?”

Rey pressed her hand against her still smarting wound. It felt like it was on fire. Like mistakenly grasping onto a piece of durasteel left for years in the hot sand of Jakku. She tested her wound by moving her right arm around — the burnt flesh protesting the movement. Wincing as she switched off her lightsaber. “My side feels like a roasted steelpecker.”
Vader switched off his own saber and clipped it to his belt. “You did well...better than I expected.”

Rey snorted. “I did awful...”

Vader shook his helmet as he made his way over to a supplies drawer situated in the wall of the room. Opening the drawer he reached in and took out a bacta patch before making his way back over to Rey.

“That was only the second time you wielded a lightsaber,” Vader told her as he peeled open the package. He gestured to Rey to lift up her shirt so he could place the patch on the wound on her ribs. “And I’ve been wielding one for longer than you’ve been alive.” A pause as he pressed the bacta patch into her burn. “I’ve been training since I was a child.”

Rey hissed as the bacta went to work. A cool sensation soon began relieving the burn.

Vader began to make his way out of the room, Rey following closely behind him, still clutching her saber.

“You had a weapon on Jakku.” It was a statement, not a question.

Rey nodded as they quietly made their way down the empty hallway towards Vader’s quarters. “I salvaged a quarterstaff from one of the Star Destroyers in the desert.”

Vader nodded as he waved open his door. The two stepped inside his quarters.

“How long have you been training with it?” He was curious.

Rey frowned. “I got it when I was twelve, after an... incident.” She shrugged. She didn’t want to talk to Darth Vader of all people about what had happened to her that night. “So I’ve been training with it for a few years. I’m nineteen now,” she explained. “Why?”

He shook his head. “Just curious.” He gestured for her to sit at the table in the middle of the room. He pulled out his datapad from a nearby storage unit before sitting down with Rey at the table.
He began typing on his datapad, taking notes about Rey’s training.

She didn’t understand why he needed to, he saw and spoke with her almost everyday. She fiddled with the hilt of her lightsaber, running her fingers over the bumps and ridges. Vader had yet to ask for it back. “Do you want this back?” Rey voiced to him, drawing his attention back to his Padawan.

He looked at her hands on the table, holding her lightsaber. He shook his head. “I have my own lightsaber. That one is yours.” He went back to his typing.

Silence ensued until he finished his assessment of her.

“Tell me about Jakku.”

Rey jerked back to look at the Sith Lord sitting across from her. “Excuse me?”

“Tell me about Jakku,” he repeated. “What was it like there?”

“It is a desert planet in the Western Reaches of the Inner Rim.” Rey began spouting off. “It was the location of the Battle of Jakku, the final battle before the Empire fell to the New Republic.”

“So you’ve said.” Vader nodded at her. “What was it like?”

Rey looked at Vader, confused as to what he was searching for. “Well...it’s a desert, so there was sand. Quite a bit of it, too.” Vader’s amused annoyance pulsed against Rey’s shields. Rey shook her head, continuing on. “I’m not sure what you want to know about it. The inhabitants there were either scavengers or farmers, if they resided in one of the settlements. Food was scarce. The majority of the planet survived off of ration portions. Crops grown there didn’t yield much. And was far too expensive for most everyone there.” Rey frowned, searching for something else to tell him. “One of the settlements, Tuanul, was a sacred village...the Church of the Force was there.”

Vader’s interest peaked. “Tuanul?”
Rey gave him a nod. “Just before I left Jakku, there were rumours that Kylo Ren and his troopers slaughtered the entire village. And then I met BB-8...he was on a classified mission, he said. The Resistance had tracked down a piece of the map to Luke to that village. To someone in that village.”

Vader nodded, made some more notes on his datapad. “Did you ever visit Tuanul?”

Rey grimaced, shaking her head. “No. Never.”

Vader’s helmet quirked. He was intrigued. “Why not?”

Rey hesitated. “The mention of it always made me uneasy. Like it was dangerous for me to go there.” She glanced up at Vader across the table. “Was that the Force talking?”

“Likely.” Vader typed something else down. “Any local myths or legends...stories that you grew up listening to?”

“What do you mean?”

Vader shrugged. “A story of somewhere haunted or risky for people to explore? All worlds have them. The Jundland Wastes on Tatooine, for example.”

Rey’s stomach churned threateningly. Vader felt her unease and set down his datapad.

“Tell me.” His attention was solely on Rey.

Rey swallowed. “Carbon Ridge. There was a rumour that there was a secret Imperial research base at Carbon Ridge. Unkar Plutt and six of his...crew went to check it out. If it truly was a research facility, then there would be a lot of things to scavenge. High quality things.” Rey nodded to herself. “Plutt returned with stormtrooper armour. Two members of his crew died there. No one dared to see what he had found there.” Rey blinked. Her throat tight from worry. “Plutt was spooked for weeks afterwards. He had a strong hold on practically everything on Jakku, and he was terrified of whatever he had found in Carbon Ridge.” She looked up at Vader leaning forward in his seat. His elbows resting on the table. “What...do you know what was there? What is there?”
Vader shook his head. “I had never even heard of the planet until you mentioned it.”

“But...the Battle of Jakku…” Rey frowned. “Why —”

“Why were there Imperial Star Destroyers making their last stand above Jakku? What were they protecting?” Vader nodded to her. “Whatever was in the research base that terrified Plutt.” He pointed a gloved finger at her. “I have a feeling it was something to do with the Emperor. Something he didn’t want anyone to find out about. Including me.”

Rey raised a brow. “A contingency plan, you mean. In case you did actually carry out a coup...and succeeded.”

Vader nodded slowly. “Indeed.”

“And just where did you get your information from?” Draven asked him sceptically. The man was the one who had access to any pertinent information via his contacts within the Empire. Obi-Wan was stepping on his turf. “I was unaware Tatooine had any direct dealings with the Empire. That sand pit is ruled by the Hutts.”

Obi-Wan mentally rolled his eyes at the man. The rebels had already heard rumours of such a thing existing. There had been rumours for years of a planet killer being engineered by the Empire. Obi-Wan had only confirmed it from another source. Had only added in what he had heard.

Obi-Wan locked eyes with Draven, and threw him a tired grin. “I just happened to hear about it from an individual on Tatooine...they informed me that they had also heard that the Empire was planning on building a second Death Star as well. They were however unsure if the construction for that one had begun when I spoke with them.”

Draven narrowed his eyes. “And what was the name of this individual? You failed to mention…”

On purpose, thought Obi-Wan. He shrugged his shoulders nonchalantly. “They never told me their name.” It was the truth, technically. He sighed disappointingly, shaking his head. “From what I could tell it was an individual...relatively high up in the Empire. Someone against the construction of the Death Star.” He chose his words carefully. Vader’s disdain for the weapon was well-known.

“My contacts haven’t said anything to me regarding a second Death Star.” Draven mused. “In fact, I have barely gotten confirmation that there is even a first Death Star. All I have heard is rumours. Whispers.” He quirked his head, zeroing in on Obi-Wan. “And just what was someone supposedly high up in the Empire even doing on Tatooine?”

“I think that it is imperative that we listen to what Obi-Wan has told us, Draven.” Chancellor Mon Mothma said tiredly. “He was a General in the Clone Wars. He has seen first hand what the Empire, then the Republic, can do. As have I. There is no reason for us to not believe him. His information fits with what your contacts have told you about the rumoured superweapon.” She looked around at the other individuals situated around the table. They were nodding in agreement. Grave expressions on each of their faces. “We must not disregard anything that sounds too far fetched. The Empire has resources — influence, we could only hope for.”

Draven sighed in defeat.

Obi-Wan closed his eyes in relief. While not the end of the scrutiny, it would be dropped for the time being while they focused on other matters.

A chirping sound rang out in the room. The chancellor reached for her datapad in front of her.

She raised a brow at the information before her, before clearing her throat. “Word just came through from one of my former colleagues on Naboo. Vader’s Star Destroyer the Devastator has just left atmosphere. A search was carried out there. Stormtroopers were under orders from Darth Vader to search the planet for Obi-Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker.” She looked pointedly at Obi-Wan. “My contact informed me that no one was hurt, or killed for that matter. It appears the troopers were under strict orders from Vader to not harm anyone. She has said that they were actually very professional when dealing with her.” She scrolled through the message. Eyebrows rising in surprise. “My contact has also said that she overheard a call between Vader and the stormtroopers, apparently the next stop in their search is a planet called...Dallenor. And following that, a Carnelion IV.” She focused on Obi-Wan. “Do you have a history there? I am not sure I am familiar with those planets.”

Obi-Wan was silent for a few moments. Pondering. Wondering just what Vader was trying to tell him. Those were the planets he and Anakin visited when Obi-Wan first met him, when he took on Anakin as his Padawan. Jedi sanctioned missions. Naboo, Dallenor, Carnelion IV. In order, too. Obi-Wan swallowed, his heart racing. He rubbed at his beard. Vader was buying Obi-Wan time to train Luke; the two of them had visited a fair number of planets during their time as Master and Padawan. Vader was trying to keep Luke from the Emperor for as long as he could.

He was trying to tell Obi-Wan what he was doing. Making it obvious to no one but his former Master. Vader had to have known his call with the stormtroopers was being listened in on. He knew the Queen of Naboo was in contact with someone in the Rebel Alliance. Knew, or suspected?

It was what Padmé would have done. Naboo was a democratic world. Vader had to assume the current queen felt the same way as Padmé in regards to the Empire. The dictatorship.
Obi-Wan nodded slowly, focusing back on the question Mothma had asked him. “I had missions on those planets in the past.” He frowned to himself, how much could he tell them? “Dallenor is a desert planet. There was a Jedi Holocron there that I was tasked with retrieving. People were after it. The citizens of Dallenor were in danger from having that holocron.” He sighed, shaking his head. “Carnelion is...was...a war torn planet. Non-habitable on the surface. Its inhabitants resided in the atmosphere.”

Mothma snapped her fingers, pointing at Obi-Wan. “That’s right! Carnelion...it had poisonous gas on the surface. They had agreed to stop their civil war.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “That is correct, yes.” He paused. “How long was Vader there?”

Mon blew air through her lips as she looked back at her message. “Three weeks.” She scrolled some more. “But...Vader never set foot on the planet. He stayed on his ship. He left his troopers to do the search. A few dozen of them, apparently.”

“That’s strange for him,” Draven said quietly. “He usually puts himself on the front lines.”

Another man, Obi-Wan didn’t know his name, hummed in agreement. “He’s usually the one interrogating...torturing really, before slaughtering his victims after he got whatever he wanted.” The man shivered. “I heard he can read minds...some Sith thing.”

_A Jedi thing as well_, Obi-Wan added on silently. He took a sip of his caf, making eye contact with Mon. She was fighting a grin as she, too, sipped from her mug.

“Perhaps Vader was preoccupied with something else,” she supplied quietly. She was watching Obi-Wan closely. Trying to get a read on him. “Perhaps he was uncomfortable with visiting Naboo...for whatever reason.”

Obi-Wan raised a single brow. Just how much did Mon know about Vader? About his true identity?

“Perhaps,” he agreed with her. Giving her a subtle nod of his head. He wanted to know just how much she knew.
The chancellor turned her attention back to the others in the room. “That is all for today. We can go back to our other responsibilities now that we have heard the information Obi-Wan has come here with.” She switched off her datapad. “Unless something else comes up, we will reconvene at 08:00 hours tomorrow morning.”

The other high command members made to leave the room. It was well past the time for lunch in the mess hall. Undoubtedly some were exceptionally hungry, having listened to Obi-Wan for the better part of two hours.

Obi-Wan remained seated at the table, as did Mon Mothma. They were both watching each other closely, waiting for the room to clear before speaking with one another.

“You can go Draven,” Mon said to the Intelligence General. “We’re just old friends wishing to catch up with each other.” She gave him a tired smile. “I will see you tomorrow morning.”

“Chancellor.” He gave her a nod as he stood up from his seat at the table. He narrowed his eyes at Obi-Wan once more as he left the room.

Obi-Wan sighed as he made his way over, closer to Mon.

“You can’t hold it against him for taking his job seriously.” Mon chided him, good-naturedly. She patted the seat next to her.

Obi-Wan took it, turning the chair to better watch the chancellor. She did the same to her seat, now facing him.

“I need you to be honest with me, Obi-Wan. Was it Vader who informed you of the Death Stars. Was it him who told you to flee Tatooine with Luke Skywalker?” Mon quirked her head slightly as she waited for him to respond.

Obi-Wan blinked in surprise. “What makes you think that?” He was certain he hadn’t given anything away.

The chancellor sighed, a small grin on her face. “When you’ve been in politics for as long as I have, you learn to pick up subtle tells that most everyone else would miss entirely.” She raised a single brow at Obi-Wan. “You were known as the Negotiator back in the days of the Clone Wars.
Today however, you’ve been out of practice for almost twenty years. I have not been.” She reached a hand towards Obi-Wan’s. Grasping it, she continued. “This seems personal to you. Extremely personal. I know that Darth Vader is also known as the Executioner. I know that he makes it a point to hunt down every single Jedi in the galaxy to kill them.” She paused. “But...he didn’t execute you. Out of character for him. He sent troopers down to Naboo to search for a Jedi Knight and his charge, while he stayed behind on his Destroyer. Which is also out of character for him.” She squeezed his hand. “What is going on? You need to tell me everything. I need to understand just what we are dealing with here.”

Obi-Wan grimaced. “I don’t exactly know. I swear, Mon. I don’t know.”

She nodded in understanding. “Then...tell me what you do know.”

Obi-Wan exhaled slowly. Where to begin? “Approximately three weeks ago there was a great disturbance in the Force. Anyone with even the slightest amount of Force sensitivity would have felt it.” He scratched at his beard. “I had assumed that Luke had gotten into trouble. That something had happened to him, which caused the Force inside him to awaken the way in which it did.”

Mon nodded. “He is Padmé and Anakin Skywalker’s child, I assume given his last name.” She paused, raising a brow at Obi-Wan’s surprise. “Those two were not as subtle as they thought they were.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I had hidden him with relatives of Anakin’s living on Tatooine. They took him in, raised him. Looked after him.” He swallowed. “I watched from afar. Owen Lars didn’t think too highly of the Jedi, and in all honesty I couldn’t blame him.” He cleared his throat. “Anyway, the day of the disturbance I went to Luke. He was fine. Nothing had happened. It didn’t make sense. I couldn’t explain it...not really.” He hesitated for a moment before powering through his explanation. “I then thought that perhaps it was Leia that had awoken in the Force.” He looked up at Mon.

Mon frowned. “Princess Leia? Adopted daughter of the Organa’s?”

Obi-Wan nodded once. “Padmé was pregnant with twins. Luke and Leia are brother and sister.”

“Which is why you are helping her strengthen her shields.” Mon responded, nodding to herself. “Do they know they are related?”
Obi-Wan nodded. “I informed them when we were leaving Alderaan. There was no way to hide that kind of connection, not once they were together. In close proximity with one another.” He swallowed. “Leia doesn’t wish to be trained in the Force, but she is exceptionally strong in it. Like Luke is. Like Anakin was.” He paused. “Is,” he corrected. He raised a hand to stop Mon’s question. “Leia needs to strengthen her shields in order to hide from the Emperor. Given that she is from a core world, that she is a political figure who will probably continue to interact with the Empire, it is imperative that her shields are extremely strong.”

He took a sip of his caf before continuing. “A day later, after I had first felt the disturbance on Tatooine, Darth Vader shows up in his TIE, wanting to speak with me.” He shook his head at himself. “I completely missed him approaching until it was far too late. He had shielded himself from me until the last possible moment.” He swallowed, still unsure about what he had experienced. “He insisted that he just wanted to talk. To discuss some matters. He tried to assure me that he wouldn’t kill myself, or Luke for that matter. He had somehow found out about Luke.”

He rubbed his beard again, trying to gather his thoughts. “Vader informed me that the disturbance in the Force was from a young, untrained Force sensitive woman, named Rey. She’s about Luke and Leia’s age according to Vader. She had appeared on his Destroyer. He told me she had come from the future. She had told him some information about what happens in the future.” He looked back at Mon. Her eyebrows were raised high on her forehead. She gestured for him to continue. “She had Anakin Skywalker’s lightsaber when Vader found her. The same one Luke currently has.”

Mon cleared her throat. “And Darth Vader knows it’s Anakin Skywalker’s lightsaber, how exactly?”

“Because Vader is Anakin.”


Obi-Wan nodded at her. “He fell to the Darkside,” he said quietly to her. “I failed him. The Jedi Order failed him. And Palpatine took advantage of our failure. Of our mistakes. I see that now. I have had close to twenty years to see all of my errors. All of the Jedi Order’s errors with how we dealt with Anakin. How we treated him.” He let out a breath. “In hindsight...it was obvious what Palpatine was doing. His curiosity about a nine year old Anakin Skywalker. His manipulation of the Order...of everyone. It was too late before anyone noticed.”

Obi-Wan watched as Mon began to comprehend what he had just told her. She frowned at Obi-Wan. “What happened to him?” She gestured to herself. “There are things that everyone who has lived meeting Vader say about him. That he is more cyborg than human. His mask...his breathing apparatus.”
“We fought on Mustafar.”

Mon hissed, understanding instantly what Obi-Wan hadn’t said.

“I defeated him...thought I had actually killed him until a few years later.” Obi-Wan paused, pinching the bridge of his nose. His head was starting to hurt. “I left him, burning on the shores of the lava rivers. I had...sliced off his legs...and an arm. He couldn’t move. I left him burning on Mustafar, screaming in pain, in anger. I assume the respirator is because the ash...the heat from Mustafar damaged his lungs. I flew away to get Padmé to a medical center. She was hurt. Anakin...Vader had Force choked her.” Obi-Wan’s voice was quivering with emotion.

“He killed her?” Mon said to him. “He killed his...Padmé?” Her eyes were glassy from unshed tears.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. He had hurt her. But she regained consciousness. She went into labour. She died shortly after she had given birth. The medical droids couldn’t explain why she was dying. She should not have died. There was no reason for her to.”

Mon hid her face behind her hands, taking a moment to gather herself. Obi-Wan let the silence stretch out. He knew that Padmé and Mon were close friends.

“I need to focus on this analytically right now, so forgive me for my callousness.” Mon said to him after a few more minutes of silence.

Obi-Wan nodded in understanding.

“What exactly did Vader tell you on Tatooine?”

Obi-Wan exhaled slowly. Running through what Vader and he had discussed. “He asked me what I knew about time travel. He mentioned Rey had Anakin’s old lightsaber. I had taken it from him on Mustafar as he lay on the shores. He knew this. He saw me take it.” He paused for a moment. “Vader told me that Rey said the Empire would fall. That in her time the Empire had fallen. But it had been replaced with another. That there was another Dark Force user...another apprentice.” Obi-Wan hesitated. “Anakin’s grandson was the apprentice. That is the time Rey came from.” He swallowed. “He said that the Emperor had also felt the disturbance, which is not surprising, but he had assumed that it was from Luke. That he had found out about Luke and had ordered Vader to
bring Luke to him. To train him in the Darkside of the Force. Likely to be Vader’s replacement.”

Obi-Wan took a long drink of his now lukewarm caf. “He told me to run and hide with Luke; to leave Owen and Beru Lars behind if they refused to come with me. That I needed to protect him from the Emperor. From Palpatine. He told me that in Rey’s time, the Emperor didn’t actually meet Luke until the second Death Star was around. Which according to Rey wouldn’t happen for another four years. Anakin said he didn’t think he’d be able to prolong his search for that long. That Palpatine would find someone else to hunt Luke down.” He paused once more. “He told me to get to his daughter and protect her as well. He doesn’t know her identity, just that he has a daughter. He didn’t know if Palpatine knew about her as well.”

“Why was he trying to help you? Trying to warn you?” Mon asked after another moment of silence. It was a lot of information to digest. “It seems out of character for Vader. Prior to today, I would have assumed that he would have killed you and taken his son.”

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. “Rey told him that he came back to the light side and killed Palpatine in her time, before dying along with him. That Luke brought him back to the light.” He sniffed. “I asked him if he wanted to return to the light side. I could feel his uncertainty. He told me that what he wants was irrelevant. He wouldn’t actually answer me.”

Mon nodded slowly. “Which, in itself could be an answer. He may not know what he wants.”

Obi-Wan sighed, nodding in agreement. It felt therapeutic to tell someone about everything that had happened. He didn’t want to stop talking. “He told me a bit about Rey.”

Mon smiled at him, her eyes warm. “And what did he say about her?”

“That she was exceptionally strong in the Force. That she is incredibly bright, Force-wise.” At Mon’s look of confusion he elaborated. “That means she is light side. That she is like...the Jedi...on the light side of the Force.” At Mon’s nod he continued. “He taught her how to shield herself from the Emperor. He taught her in less than a day.”

“And what does that mean? Is that good?”

Obi-Wan gave her a tired grin. “It normally takes Force users weeks, or months, to properly shield. It took Anakin almost a month to learn how to shield himself entirely, and even then he could only ever hold his shields for a relatively short amount of time, before having to rebuild them.” He
shook his head. “He had a difficult time...he was emotional, missing his mother. His focus wasn’t ideal.” He paused, frowning to himself. “I think he was also picking up on other people’s emotions. The Jedi Masters...they didn’t want him there. They thought he was too old to be taught and I think that nine year old Anakin picked up on that.”

“Will he train her to be a Sith like him?” Mon asked him quietly. “Should we be worried that we may find ourselves fighting another Dark Force user?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “He said the Force was insisting to him to train her...in the lightside of the Force.”

“As a Jedi.” A statement, not a question.

He nodded. “I think...I think Rey has given him a focus. I think she is changing things, changing him. Showing him that he has options. His Naboo visit illustrates that. The places he is searching for me and Luke, those were the first places both Anakin and I went to...in order. Naboo, then Dallenor, and then Carnelion IV.” He looked carefully at Mon in front of him. “When I was on Tatooine...I learned a lot about family. The importance of family in Tatooine culture. It means everything. Family before anything else. Without family, there is nothing left worth fighting for.”

“And Rey told him about his family,” the chancellor supplied. “She told him about his grandson. So she must have told him about Luke and Leia as well. He must have learned of your location through her.”

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement. “She may not have had any other choice. If the Emperor tasked Vader with finding Luke then he would have found us eventually.” He swallowed. “She may have made a deal with him. He learned from me who Luke’s guardians were, but he never went to visit them. He just visited me before taking off in his TIE back to his Destroyer hovering high over Tatooine.”

Mon nodded at his assessment. “How would you describe Vader...Anakin now? Psychologically. How is he?”

Obi-Wan grimaced. “Unstable. Something happened yesterday...he had a breakdown of some sort. I felt his emotions like he was right beside me. Even Luke and Leia knew something was going on and they’ve had very little training, if any. I felt his hate. His anger. His regret.” He took a breath. “His grief,” he said quietly.
Mon pursed her lips in thought. “He’s conflicted.”

Obi-Wan rubbed his face, nodding.

She took a sip of her long forgotten caf and made a face before swallowing the ice cold contents. “I have a plan...not a thorough one. And probably not a great one either. But it is a plan for right now.”

“Go on.”

“Vader’s true identity stays between you and me.” She looked pointedly at Obi-Wan. “Most people here, as you’ve heard at our meeting, do not understand the Force. How it works. I barely understand it, and I can tell you what I do understand is entirely from what Mace Windu told me some twenty years ago.”

Obi-Wan looked at her in shock. “What do you mean? Why was he teaching you about the Force?”

The chancellor grinned. “While I do know that it was against Jedi rules to form attachments with people, I do know that casual...relations were relatively common.”

Obi-Wan was shocked. Mace Windu, of all the Jedi Masters, the most straight laced one had something on the side. He started snickering. He should’ve known it was all a front.

Mon scoffed. “He was just a companion. An occasional companion. Someone to talk to. Don’t get any ideas. We were both focused entirely on our...professions, if you will.”

Obi-Wan nodded, still fighting a grin. “I am sorry for your loss.” He sobered up completely.

Mon gave him a sad smile. “Thank you. I am sorry for yours as well.”

Obi-Wan nodded his thanks.

“Secondly, nothing about time travel gets out. To anyone. Just you and I, and hopefully Rey and
Vader. That’s it. I know that it is likely that we have some Imperial spies here, just like the Rebellion has spies in the Empire.”

“I agree.” Obi-Wan assured her.

“Thirdly,” Mon continued. “I would like you to stay here with Luke. And Leia, actually. I realize that you need to train Luke, but I need you here to help me keep watch on what the Empire is doing. On what Vader is doing. I need you here to translate what he may be trying to tell you with his actions.”

Obi-Wan hesitated for a moment before nodding in agreement. “I can figure out how to train him here. It’s no problem.” He paused, remembering what he had told Vader before he left Tatooine. “I told Anakin that he couldn’t get attached to Rey. That her being with him on that Star Destroyer was putting them both at risk. I told him that if he was found out by the Emperor, if his actions were catching up with him, he would have to get Rey to flee.”

“You think she knows where the Rebel Base is.”

He nodded. “I think she was told about quite a lot before she came back in time. Vader said that just before she arrived in this time, she found herself in trouble with the First Order...the Empire of her time. That she had found herself with the Rebels somehow.”

Mon’s eyes grew wide. “You think someone filled her in on what happened before her time. That someone with the Rebels now knew she would be coming back in time.”

Obi-Wan hesitated. “Perhaps.” He conceded. “Or perhaps the Force told that person to tell Rey about what happened today in this time. Someone Force sensitive.”


“The Dallenor search is completed,” Vader said to Rey as the two sat down at Vader’s table in his quarters.

Rey nodded as she took a bite of her meal — a veg protein ration concoction paired with leftover bread from Naboo. The bread was getting slightly stale, but was still delicious in Rey’s opinion.

“Now you search Carnelion?” Rey asked her host curiously. She grabbed a chunk of her veg protein and stuffed it in her mouth. She was starving — famished from her lightsaber session with Vader in his training room. She had believed herself to be in shape from her experience on Jakku. She was wrong — she was nowhere near to where she needed to be.

Vader watched as she chewed her food before nodding. “It will be a short search. A few days at most. It is a difficult planet to get close to, and not much available to search.”

“And then what?” Vader hadn’t mentioned where they would be going next.

“I must go to Coruscant.”

Rey’s stomach seized up. “W-why?”

“Empire Day,” Vader informed her. “I must be there, next to Sidious, when he gives his annual speech.” He paused. Rey could feel his frustration. “It would be idiotic for me not to be there. The Emperor would know at once that something was amiss.”

Rey pushed her plate away. Her appetite gone. “Will I be there as well?”

“No. Not on Coruscant, at least.” Vader tried to assure her. “I can think of two — three options for you.”

Rey nodded, indicating he could continue.
“First option: you stay on my Destroyer high above Coruscant. I shouldn’t be on planet for more than a week. Two weeks at most. You stay here, keeping yourself shielded. SD-2826 can provide you with food. But you would have to stay in my quarters. No wandering.” Vader paused for a moment, letting the first option sink in for Rey. “It would be risky. You would be surrounded by Imperial forces.”

“And Palpatine.”

Vader acknowledged her point. “Second option: I make a detour on our way to Coruscant and drop you off at my fortress on Mustafar.” Rey hissed quietly. Even she had heard stories about this place. It was where Jedi went to die. “No one would be there, except for a few droids. I would make sure of that. It would be safe for you.” Vader hesitated. “Mostly safe for you,” he amended. “You would be far away from the Emperor.”

Rey gave him a tight nod. “And the third option?”

Vader looked down at the table. His dislike for the third option wafted against Rey. “I get you access to a ship capable of life support and hyperspace travel, and you find your Rebel group.” He looked back up at Rey. “We would be finished. You wouldn’t be able to come back here.”

The Force was hissing at Rey. This option, while the safest, was not the one she should be taking. It wasn’t the right time to leave Vader. It was too soon.

Rey shook her head. “Not option three.” She cleared her throat. “Scratch that one off of the list. The Force is saying it’s the wrong choice.”

Relief wrapped around Rey. “Consider it done,” Vader informed her. “Which of the other two options are you most comfortable with?”

Rey snorted softly. Raising an eyebrow. “Neither?”

“The Force isn’t suggesting one over the other?” Vader prompted.

Rey shook her head. “No...completely silent.” She paused, watching Vader closely. “Run the two options by me again.”
“Coruscant.” He began. “Pros: I would be close by. You wouldn’t be on this ship without me for more than a couple of weeks. If anything were to go wrong, I could get to you quickly. In minutes.” He paused. “Cons: you’d be surrounded by Imperial Forces. Your shields may falter because you haven’t been around billions of people before. It can be overwhelming for a Force sensitive like yourself.” At Rey’s look of confusion, he elaborated. “Your strength in the Force. You are very strong in the Force, but also very new. It would likely be too much, too soon for you.” Rey gave him a nod. “The Emperor would also be extremely close by. I’ve no doubt he would be searching for every threat, having a number of high ranking individuals together is a risk. His search would be thorough. Probing. Overwhelming.”

Vader shifted in his seat. “Mustafar. Pros: you would be far away from the Emperor and other Imperial Forces. The location would keep you safe — most everyone in the Empire is afraid of being there. You shouldn’t have any unexpected visitors while I am away. Like I said before, I would only be gone for a week or two at the most. I would like to make some improvements on my suit, which I can do after Coruscant. I need to do that on Mustafar.” Vader was uneasy. Unsure. “Cons: It is a Sith fortress. You insisted that I only teach you the light side of the Force. There, you would be surrounded by the dark. If anything were to go wrong...it would take me at least two hours to get to you. And that is assuming I can get away from Coruscant quickly.”

Rey nodded. Her choices were risky. Both of them.

“What do you think I should do?” Rey asked him quietly. “Where do you think I should go?”

Vader was silent for a moment. The sound of his respirator filling the void. “I am leaning towards Mustafar. I can control that environment better than Coruscant. I will have my guards leave with me to Coruscant. I can program my security droids to accept you there. You would be alone with those droids, but I will have SD-2826 stay with you as well.” Rey gave a jerky nod of her head. “It can be dangerous for you to be there,” Vader continued on. “I do not want you to meditate at all. My fortress is built on top of a Sith Temple — a cave, it will be risky for you to open yourself up to the Force during your meditation. Focus on your shields. Your walls. Work on your lightsaber training. Nothing else.”

Rey swallowed, nervous. “And you’ll come back for me?” Her voice broke. This felt like familiar territory.

“Yes. I will.” Vader leaned forward in his seat. “It is my home. You are my Padawan. I will not leave you there. I will not abandon you.”

Rey would have to trust him, she had no other choice. “What is Empire Day like?” She asked him,
changing the topic. She didn’t want to think about being left behind again. “You said the Emperor gives a speech?”

Vader leaned back in his chair. “Correct.” He paused. “He will give his yearly address to the Galactic Empire. There will be military parades on most Imperial-controlled worlds. There will be extravagant celebrations all over.”

Rey nodded at his basic explanation. She had heard from Leia that the Republic Alliance had changed it, instead, to a Remembrance Day of sorts, for Alderaan. For all the victims of the Empire. For all the pain and hurt brought on by the war. She couldn’t remember anything ever happening on Jakku when she was a child there. Not even an acknowledgement to the end of Palpatine. To the end of the Empire. They were forgotten about. The location of the final battle and there was nothing there from the New Republic commiserating it. Jakku’s people were irrelevant. Unimportant.

Rey cleared her throat, shaking her head at her wayward thoughts. “What about the Death Star? Have you heard anything recently? Is it finished?”

“Nothing yet.” Vader quirked his head. “Not to say it is not completed. Just that I am unaware. I would think the Emperor will let us know during Empire Day celebrations.”

Rey’s stomach dropped. “A demonstration…” Leia hadn’t told her of anything like that occurring. But maybe she hadn’t known.

“No.” Vader cut off her thoughts. “Nothing public. I meant he would fill myself and the others in.” He paused, concern pulsing through his shields. “The Emperor has gone somewhat quiet.”

“Is that not normal?” Rey had no idea how the Emperor operated. Not really. Manipulative and ruthless for sure — but other than that, she had nothing.

Vader slowly shook his head. “Not usually. It has happened a few times before.” At Rey’s intrigue he continued. “When he believed there to be a spy he would cease the majority of communications, unless absolutely necessary.”

Rey’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead. Erso? Or perhaps he suspected something was going on with his apprentice. “You?”
"I am not a spy." Vader’s anger now evident. He pointed a gloved finger at Rey. “I am not a spy. I will not become a spy. Ever.”

Rey winced. “I never said you were one. I just thought that perhaps he might think something was off with you...given that I am here with you. Something that he is not supposed to know about.” She tried to explain. “I thought that maybe you aren’t at subtle as you think you are. Maybe someone here has let him know you are doing things a bit differently than before.” She waved her hand. “You didn’t set foot on Naboo...even though you are searching for a Jedi Knight. You delayed the search on Tatooine for half a day. Your search on Dallenor lasted for weeks when it was obvious that Obi-Wan and Luke were not there...I just thought that perhaps he noticed. Perhaps others have noticed and told him.”

“My soldiers are loyal to me,” Vader insisted.

Rey raised an eyebrow in response. “Are they? Do you honestly think the occasional bit of fresh food will guarantee their loyalty? They are not starving scavengers from a worthless planet like Jakku. They are soldiers — officers — of the Empire. They are not the soldiers of Darth Vader.”

Vader’s fist clenched. “They are loyal to me,” he repeated. “I would know otherwise.”

Rey sighed. His anger was beginning to give her a headache. “Fine.” She waved him off, wanting none of his hatred.

She rolled her eyes once Vader pulled back his emotions. “Can we talk about the Death Star?”

“What of it?”

“In my time...before my time — my history...it was used twice to my knowledge.” Rey began to explain. “Is it at all possible to prevent that from happening again?”

Vader gave her a shrug. “If not those planets, then where? Perhaps trying to prevent it from occurring in the first place will lead to other worlds being destroyed. More worlds being destroyed.”

“You think it’s the Force’s will.” Rey raised an eyebrow in annoyance. “That billions of people have got to die because the Force insisted that they do.” She scoffed. “That’s garbage!”
“It may not be possible,” Vader tried explaining to Rey. “It may not be preventable.” He gestured to Rey to calm down. “Can you tell me what happened in your history? I assume Scarif is involved, given what you’ve said to me already.”

Rey’s lip wobbled. She swallowed, trying to regain control of her emotions. “Um...yeah...Tarkin ordered the Death Star to fire a shot on the Imperial Archives on Scarif in an effort to stop the transmission of the Death Star plans to nearby Rebel ships.” Rey nodded to herself, remembering what General Organa had told her. “There is a flaw in the design — purposely built in to allow for the destruction of the weapon.”

Rey shook her head. She was angry. “He was too late. Rebels got the plans anyway. My General got captured by you. You attempted to get the location of the Rebel base from her, but were unsuccessful. Tarkin was annoyed, decided he didn’t like how you questioned your subjects. That it was taking too long. He decided to use the full power of the Death Star on my General’s home world. Your daughter’s home world. He forced her to watch the destruction of her planet. She still wouldn’t tell either of you the location of the base. Even then.” Rey paused, taking a breath. “She was awaiting her execution when Luke, Kenobi, and your future son-in-law rescued her. She had sent two droids to ask Kenobi for help. She was told by her adoptive father that if you were ever after her, to ask Obi-Wan for help.”

She glared at Vader on the other side of the table. She was angry. Furious.

Vader held up a hand. “I promise you...I will not torture my daughter again. I won’t.”

Rey knew this. She knew that this Vader wouldn’t harm his daughter. He had assured her time and time again — the Force always rang true.

“An engineer then?” Vader prompted her.

Rey watched him with huge eyes. Now nervous. “What?” She couldn’t think of anything more intelligent to say.

“An engineer is the spy. An engineer created the flaw in the design of the Death Star.” Vader was impressed. “He had planned this betrayal of the Empire for years and I have no idea who he is.” He paused, curious. “I’m not sure anyone knows. He would’ve been terminated already if that were the case.”
Rey had nothing to say. She continued staring at Vader.

The Sith Lord focused on Rey. “Where is the fatal flaw?”

Rey shook her head. “Why should you know? Perhaps you’ll tell Sidious when you catch up with him in person on Coruscant.”

Vader waved her off. Amusement brushing against her shields. “Not likely. He is aware I do not necessarily support such a weapon. I am not exactly subtle in my disdain for it. If no one will listen to me saying how unnecessary it is, then who am I to stop the destruction of it?” He shrugged. “It is not my fault that the Empire’s vast number of engineers and designers have all failed to spot the flaw.”

Rey scoffed. “So...pettiness then. You’ll allow the destruction solely out of spite.”

Vader shrugged again. “It has kept me alive this long.”

Rey just shook her head. She didn’t know what to say to that.

“Where is the flaw, Rey?” Vader’s curiosity was keening around her. “Where did the engineer put it? It must be somewhere the Rebels could reach...outside? The shielding is faulty?” Vader shook his head. “Where?”

Rey sighed. She looked down at her hands clasped together. “There is a two meter wide thermal exhaust port that leads directly to the station’s main reactor. Proton torpedoes were dropped down the exhaust port. They set off a chain reaction.”

“An impossible shot.” Vader was impressed.

Rey nodded. “For most, yes.”

Vader’s helmet quirked. “Unless you had the Force to help guide the torpedoes to the main
reactor.” Pride caressed around Rey. “Does Tarkin perish on the Death Star when my son destroys it?” Rey could feel his grin.

She shivered at the elation radiating off of Vader and nodded.

“Good.” Vader gave her a curt nod. At Rey’s confusion he explained further. “He has attempted to kill me multiple times. It is fitting that my son is the one to kill him.”

Rey’s breath caught in her throat. “Why? I thought you both were on the same side…”

She could feel Vader’s amusement at her statement. Her naivety.

“Tarkin wants power. I have the Force, as does the Emperor. Tarkin doesn’t. I assume he feels inadequate.” Vader paused. “He doesn’t have command of the Death Star as of yet. Right now that is Krennic. However, it is not surprising that Tarkin will take over from him. Krennic is a complete fool.”

Rey shook her head at the absurdity of it all.

Vader quirked his helmet at her. “I will allow your Rebels to obtain the plans for the Death Star. I will allow them to destroy it. I will figure out a way to get my daughter out of there. Perhaps by doing that we can prevent her home world from being destroyed.”

Rey rubbed her face. “Why? I thought you weren’t a spy.”

“I’m not…but I will protect my family. Help my family, if I can. It is my duty as their father. I should be the one protecting my children. Not Obi-Wan. The Force is telling me to help. I will do that.” Vader informed her. His confusion spiked. “Where was I? When my son destroyed the Death Star…”

Rey frowned. “You were in your TIE, shooting down the Rebel X-Wings that were attacking the Death Star. Attempting to shoot down Luke.” She left out the part of Han Solo coming to the rescue of Luke. Having Luke’s back. Vader didn’t need to know.
Rey kneeled down as she stepped into the durasteel storage container. Underneath her were blankets and a change of clothes. Rations were tucked along the side. Three weeks worth of meals if Rey was to have one bar per day. Leaning forward she made herself as small as possible, waiting for Vader to close the lid.

“It will only be for a few minutes.” Vader informed her. “We are right above Mustafar.”

Rey gave him a nod. Too nervous to speak. She was beginning to have serious doubts about this plan. Doubting whether she was ready to face such a dark location on her own.

Two weeks was the length of time Vader had confirmed with her. Two weeks of Rey alone in his Sith Fortress. Two weeks of Vader next to the Emperor. Anytime during his stay on Coruscant he could let Sidious know about Rey. She wouldn’t even know.

She would be defenceless. Vulnerable.

Her hand reached to her side, checking to make sure her lightsaber was still there. She allowed herself a bit of relief when her palm brushed against the hilt.

She nodded once more. “Okay.” Her voice cracked.

The lid snapped shut, she was once more plunged into darkness.

Rey focused on breathing slowly. Remaining calm. The storage container gave a jerk of movement before it began rolling along. SD-2826, Vader’s personal droid, was pulling the container through the hallway as the three of them made their way towards the hanger.

The rumble of Vader’s vocoder could be heard. Muffled from the durasteel.

They kept moving.
It was a few minutes before Rey felt the incline up the ramp into the transport vessel they’d be taking to the surface of Mustafar. A few more minutes before the ship left the hanger of Vader’s Star Destroyer.

Rey swallowed, her throat tight. She could feel the darkness begin to wrap around her. Like oil coating her skin. She felt dirty. Grimy. She wanted to leave; wanted to get as far away from this place as possible.

She wanted to go home. Home to Jakku. To her AT-AT Walker.

Her eyes began to burn with unshed tears. She squeezed them shut. Tight. Trying to block out her mistake. This was wrong. She should not have agreed to stay here. To hide here.

She let out a shaky breath. She couldn’t fall apart. It was far too late to change course.

A comforting presence began wrapping around her. Protecting her. Soothing her. Vader.

_Anakin._

Rey almost sobbed in relief.

The transport touched down. Rey’s container wobbled slightly at the shaky landing.

She could feel the transport vessel beginning its standby sequence. The engines shifting to idle.

Her container began rolling again. Pulled down the loading ramp. Voices.

Multiple people speaking.

Vader’s vocoder rumbling a response.
Rey felt they were now moving quickly through the fortress. An unknown voice asking Vader something. Following. Pestered.

“Wait for me on my ship!” Rey could now hear Vader loud and clear. As could whomever he was speaking to. Rey felt their presence distance themselves from Vader. *Fear.*

Rey breathed a sigh of relief. Blinked open her eyes.

Her container rolled to a stop. The latch unsnapped. Lid opened.

“It’s just us now.” Vader was standing close.

Rey lifted her head up and straightened out. Now kneeling in her container. She slowly stood up, taking a look around the room she, Vader, and SD-2826 were in.

Vader held out a hand to help her out of her container. “We are in my medical facility right now.” He gestured behind himself.

Rey took a closer look. A large bacta tank was present, already prepped and ready for Vader. Off to the side of the room was a bench full of various mechanical parts and tools. A few partially constructed limbs sat on the workbench, along with damaged limbs. Damaged helmets.

She exhaled slowly. Uncomfortable. This place felt strangely personal.

She watched as Vader made his way over to a data screen built into the wall. He began punching in commands.

A security prompt filled the screen. Vader quickly typed in his identification and password. “I’ve just readjusted the security droid protocol. They now recognize you. You will be free to roam here while I am away.” He was speaking quickly, in a rush to leave for Coruscant. “Do not wander any lower than the flight deck on the lower level.”

He turned to face Rey. “I have a training facility here. With droids for you to practice with. I have them currently set for fatal return fire. I recommend adjusting their settings to the minimum — a
slight sting. A slight burn.”

Rey nodded. “I will be able to do that?”

Vader gave her a single nod. “No meditation. At all. We will pick it up again once we leave here.” He paused, hesitant. “I am still protecting you from the effects of the Sith temple below us. The darkness. Once I leave here it will become evident once more. Work on your shields. This darkness is temporary — you must remember that. It is only two weeks. I will come back here. I will not abandon you.”

Rey hummed. Unease sat heavy in her stomach. “What if someone from the Empire shows up?”

Vader focused on Rey. “Kill them.” At Rey’s protest he held up a hand. “Or hide. But you must realize...they will kill you once they find you. They won’t hesitate.”

Rey swallowed and gave him a curt nod.

“I have it set up so that you will be notified when someone lands on the flight deck or makes their way through any of the entrances. It will appear on all of the screens. They are located in every room.” He gestured to the wall. “I will also be notified when any ship or person sets foot in this place.” Vader told her. “I will come. But like I said before: I am hours away at best.”

“Thank you,” Rey said quietly. “For helping me. For hiding me. Thank you.” She had a feeling she needed to tell him. That it was important that he knew.

Vader just quirked his helmet. “I must leave now. I need to get to Coruscant.” He quickly left the room, cape billowing behind him.

Rey stepped closer to the screen on the wall. Watching as Vader made his way back to his transport vessel. SD-2826 rolling over next to her.

“It will be alright, Miss Rey. I am here to protect you. My master has ordered me to protect you at all costs.” SD-2826 sounded proud of her task. “I will do what I am ordered. I have never once failed a mission.”
“Thank you, Essdee.” Rey told her companion quietly. Well aware that SD-2826 was far more skilled than any standard droid. Vader had undoubtedly felt the need to make adjustments with its programming. Adding in various programs and skills to give his personal droid the ability to act as a sort of bodyguard.

Rey exhaled slowly as she watched Vader make his way up the ramp into his shuttle. Two individuals behind him followed afterwards. “Who are the two people with Vader, Essdee?”

“His two assistants. They normally spend the majority of their time here.” SD-2826 responded pleasantly. “They were assigned by the Emperor. They are Vader’s bodyguards while he is resting in his bacta tank.”

Rey nodded slowly. “Are they Force sensitive?”

The droid rolled back away from Rey almost as if she was in shock. SD-2826 quirked her head at the question.

“Yes. But Master Vader has said that they are weak in the Force.” SD-2826 rolled back closer to Rey. “He is unimpressed with them and leaves them here as often as he can.”

Rey watched the screen as the transport vessel left the hanger.

She was now truly alone. She felt Vader’s protection begin to slowly slip off of her. The darkness beginning to hum around Rey once more.

She focused on her shields. Testing them. Strengthening them.

A slow exhale as Vader reached his Star Destroyer.

A quiet sob as the Devastator jumped to hyperspace.

Rey felt vulnerable. Exposed.
Vader’s protection was completely gone.
Rey shivered slightly as she felt the darkness curiously examining its new guest. Wrapping her arms around herself in a futile attempt to stave off said darkness, she focused once more on her shielding.

Pulling further into herself, Rey examined her multiple walls built high and strong in her mind. She already had four walls fully erect within her mind and was uncertain if she would actually be able to construct another. Perhaps if she focused on strengthening the ones she had?

She nodded to herself. That was what she’d focus on. Making sure her current walls were able to withstand the intrigue of the darkness down in the Sith temple below her feet. She carefully placed reinforcements at strategic locations along the lengths of her walls.

It would only be for two weeks. Just fourteen days before Vader would return to her. Fourteen days was nothing compared to the years she spent alone, waiting for her parents to return to Jakku. To come back for her. The lonely nights lying awake, listening to the creaks and groans of her AT-AT Walker as the heat dissipated throughout the night. The scorching days searching for something to scavenge for food just to survive for one more day. She couldn’t miss her parents returning. She wouldn’t. It was the only thing that gave her enough drive to continue scavenging every single day. The only thing that prevented her from giving up the fight for survival, like so many others had before her.

And it was all for nothing — her parents had sold her off like one would sell off a piece of junk.

Rey shook her head at herself. Attempting to dispel her loneliness. Her anger. Her parents may have sold her to Unkar Plutt, but today she had something else to fight for. Someone else to fight for.

And he would be coming back. He assured her he wouldn’t leave her here alone. Vader — Anakin — was many things, but he wasn’t a liar. Not to her. Never to her.

Blinking open her eyes, Rey refocused on her surroundings. She had two weeks to learn more about Vader. About the man underneath the armour. About Anakin Skywalker. What better place than in his medical facility? What better place than in his home?

Rey made her way towards the workbench along the side of the large room. On top of the bench...
were various limbs and tools. A left leg was nearest to Rey. Beginning just above the knee. Next to it was a right leg — slightly longer, although not by much. Rey reached a hand out, wanting to touch the leg. Curiosity brimming.

Her fingers brushed the cybernetic leg. It was robust. Strong. But far less advanced than Rey thought it would be. She looked between the large bacta tank situated in the middle of the room and the limbs left on the bench. Vader would have to remove his limbs to be able to use his bacta tank. She shivered. He was incredibly vulnerable inside his tank.

*Which was why he had his guards.* Rey nodded to herself.

“Has Vader always had guards while he stays here?” She asked SD-2826, gesturing towards the bacta tank.

SD-2826 rolled closer to Rey. “Yes, Miss Rey. Although they haven’t always been the same individuals. The two that left here with him are just the most recent — I believe they have been his guards for close to two standard years.”

Rey nodded slowly. “The ones before were killed, I assume?”

The droid rolled back cautiously. “Yes, Miss Rey. Master Vader no longer trusted them. All of his previous guards have been terminated.”

“Were they all Force sensitive?” A raised eyebrow, waiting for Essdee’s response.

A jerky nod. “To an extent, Miss Rey.” The droid rolled closer to Rey, before continuing to explain. “Master Vader doesn’t view his current guards as being Force sensitive. They barely are, according to him. They are not powerful enough in the Force to be trained as Sith.”

“But the guards before were powerful enough?” Rey didn’t want to know the answer.

“Yes, Miss Rey.” SD-2826 confirmed. “They have all been terminated. Master Vader saw no use for them anymore. He no longer trusted them.”
The lack of trust, she could understand. But the lack of use was throwing her for a loop. Rey quirked her head in confusion. “No use?”

“The Jedi are all dead. They’ve all been hunted down, Miss Rey.” The droid explained carefully to Rey. “That was their sole purpose. And they succeeded. Therefore, they were terminated when they completed their mission.”

*But they didn’t succeed*, the Force whispered in her ear. *Not really, not completely.*

Rey thought of the names of the people she had yet to meet. The Jedi survivors. The light side Force users. Kenobi. Yoda. Luke and Leia. The children Luke took in to build his own Jedi Order. The New Jedi Order. Ben Solo — he was a Padawan before he fell like his Grandfather. Rey couldn’t forget that. Rey was certain there were others.

Were her parents among them? Is that where she got her abilities from? Was it genetic? For Luke and Leia it definitely was. For Ben. Was it the same for Rey?

Rey shook her head. She needed to focus on the here and now. She needed to get comfortable here in Vader Fortress. She needed to know her way around if anyone were to visit without Vader here.

“SD-2826...I would like to go exploring.” She turned to look at her droid companion. She gave her a small smile, not quite reaching her eyes. “Care to explore with me?”

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Rey wiped at her brow, twirling her lightsaber around. She had just finished her third training session with the droids in Vader’s training facilities. She was exhausted. Probably sleep deprived. And on edge. The darkness refused to leave her alone, no matter how much she tried to ignore it. She could feel it tapping against her walls constantly — searching for a way to get into her mind.

She had been here for just a week and was counting down the days before Vader would return. She wasn’t sure she would be able to last for much longer. Her loneliness was pressing against her shields constantly. Threatening to erupt out of her.

But even more than that was her anger.
Rey was angry at the Force for sending her back in time. Angry at her parents for abandoning her on Jakku. Angry at Luke for refusing to train her when she showed up on Ahch-To. Angry at Leia for sending her away to her twin brother much like she had done to her own son.

She was tired of the rejection.

The more Rey thought about it, the angrier she became. Why should she help the Resistance? Why should she help the Republic Alliance? They did nothing to help her. Nothing. The New Republic had waged war above her home world and never set foot on her planet once it was all over. Never set foot on her planet to check in with the citizens of Jakku. Not once. The Battle of Jakku had lasted for months, and when it was all said and done, the New Republic had ignored Jakku like everyone else before them.

*And why was that?* Rey angrily asked herself. Because there was nothing there for them to take from Jakku. No resources. No technology. Nothing. Jakku was irrelevant. It’s people were irrelevant. And the New Republic walked away while Jakku cleaned up the mess it had made. Until Rey came along, there was nothing the New Republic could use. Until Rey awakened in the Force the Resistance had no need for her.

Rey glared at the droid in front of her. Her anger pulsing hard underneath the surface. She needed to clear her head. She needed to focus on something else or her anger would eat her alive.

Rey shut off her lightsaber. Rubbing her eyes with the heels of her hands. “I’m finished my training for today, TD-3734.”

“Of course, Miss Rey,” the training droid replied after shutting down its own lightsaber.

Without waiting for the droids assessment of her skills with her saber, Rey left the room, making her way towards the refresher just down the hallway. She desperately needed a good wash. Then a good amount of bacta patches. TD-3734 had got her a fair number of times on both her arms and legs. If not for the beginner settings, Rey would’ve been limbless, rolling around on the floor of the training room.

Much like her Master.

Rey shook her head at herself. She couldn’t get sloppy. She couldn’t let her anger and sleep
deprivation hinder her. It would get her killed.

She needed to keep focus. Needed to strengthen her shields some more. And needed to continue on with her lightsaber training. She needed to succeed. She didn’t have any other option.

Either she’d succeed with her training in the Force, or she would be killed. She held on tightly to that thought as she stepped into the shower.

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“Miss Rey.” A voiced hissed in Rey’s ear. She twitched, trying to brush the noise away. She was so tired. She just wanted to sleep.

“Miss Rey.” The voice said once more. SD-2826. “You must wake up. There is an intruder down on the lower level.”

Rey’s eyes shot open. Suddenly alert. She sat up in her little bed on the floor in Vader’s medical room. Unease engulfed her. A darkness that she had felt before. A familiarity. A tingling up her spine.

She turned her head slightly to look at SD-2826. Standing on her own two feet, she asked, “Empire or someone else?”

“Unknown assailant, Miss Rey.” The security droid, GD-4545 said gruffly to her. “They have entered through the hanger from an unknown entry point during our patrols and made their way down into the temple below.” A pause. “We are unable to follow the assailant into the temple. We cannot engage until they return to the hanger.”

Rey nodded slowly. “Are you recording video?”

SD-2826 cut in. “Yes Miss Rey. Master Vader has also been notified. He is on his way.”

Rey shivered. She tightened her shields. Whoever this was went directly to the Sith Temple underneath Vader’s castle. A darksider. Dangerous. The Force was churning around her. Worried.
Rey quietly made her way over to the surveillance screen. Her stomach churned threateningly as she watched the intruder make their way into the temple. A familiarity rang in the Force once more. Rey didn’t understand what it was trying to tell her. What the Force was trying to say.

“Can you play it again?” Her heart was racing. The seconds slowed as the video was restarted. Again the intruder made their way into the hanger bay. Again they quickly made their way towards the entrance of the Sith temple directly underneath Vader’s Fortress. There was something about him. Something Rey wasn’t seeing. Wasn’t comprehending.

“I need to hide somewhere,” she hissed to the two droids near to her. “There is something I’m missing…” She turned to leave the room when an unwelcome thought hummed in her mind. She knew this person. From before...

“No…” Rey whispered to herself, finally comprehending just who she had seen on the recording. “I know him. I know who that is.”

“Who Miss Rey?” One of the droids asked her quietly.

“It’s Snoke.” The Force hummed in agreement. Rey’s lip wobbled in fear. “I must hide...you must tell Vader. Tell him it’s Snoke.”

She grabbed her lightsaber and took off out of the door of the medical facility. She needed to get away from him. Needed to get higher up in the Fortress. He was far too close.

Up and up she climbed. Higher and higher.

She slid around a corner, finding a dead end hallway. She was high up in the spires of Vader’s Fortress. The highest point she could possibly be. The furthest point away from Snoke far down below.

Rey unclipped the durasteel paneling of the wall and carefully slid behind it. Pulling it shut behind her. Her right hand clutching her lightsaber tightly. Her left hanging on tightly to the wiring behind her. She was in absolute darkness.
Minutes passed. Not a single sound other than Rey’s own breathing.

Checking her shields, making sure she was still well hidden, Rey began to go over what she knew about Snoke. General Organa had informed her all she could about the monster who stole her son away from his family. She had informed Rey that the Supreme Leader of the First Order was a humanoid being. Not a Sith, but a Force sensitive cloaked in darkness. He had begun influencing Leia’s son while he was still in the womb. He was obsessed with the Skywalker family. With Vader. With Luke. And with Ben.

Rey hissed at her stupidity. Of course he would show up here. Now. It was well known that Vader was on Coruscant next to the Emperor. Empire Day was only the day prior — there was nowhere else Vader would be.

Snoke had waited for the Emperor and Darth Vader to kill each other before he took charge of the remnants of the Empire. He had hid in the shadows until the most opportune moment.

Rey thought about Starkiller Base. About the Hosnian System. About the Republic Alliance. Snoke had ordered for the entire system to be wiped out. All five planets in one single shot.


She was terrified. He couldn’t find her. He wouldn’t.

She readjusted her grip on the hilt of her lightsaber and continued to wait for Vader to return. Intermittently checking her shields, making sure they remained strong.

A bead of sweat dripped off of her brow. Her nightshirt sticking to her back. The heat of Mustafar permeating the walls. Still Rey continued to wait.

She exhaled slowly, trying to remain calm. Vader would be here soon. He could be only minutes away. Maybe an hour at most.

Please hurry. Rey scrunched her eyes closed. Waiting.
The sweat began pouring off of her. She was at risk for becoming dehydrated. She wiped at her face with her left hand. Readjusting her grip on her saber in her right. Still she waited.

Her eyes shot open at the sudden feeling of the familiar darkness beginning to coil around her. She swore quietly in Huttese. Snoke now knew he wasn’t alone. He could feel her presence. The presence of another living being.

Her heart began to race.

Off in the distance Rey could hear the security droids open fire on the intruder. He had exited the temple.

Her lip wobbled. They’d only be able to slow him down, not stop him entirely. He was far too powerful already.

*Please hurry.*

Tears began running down her cheeks. She could feel him slowly making his way towards her. Up further into Vader Fortress. Searching. Curious. Carefully fighting off the droids protecting Rey.

Systematically defeating each and every single one of them.

Closer and closer he came. More and more droids falling in defeat.

Rey could hear the training droids start up. Could hear their lightsabers igniting, ready to fight.

Far too close to her. They were the last hurdle for Snoke before he would reach Rey. She knew it, and so did he.

Rey readjusted her grip on her saber. Poised, ready to attack should he find her. Her thumb on the ignition button. Her left hand placed in front of her to steady her stance within the wall.
Rey focused. Her anger pulsing behind her shields. She wouldn’t go down without a fight, of that she was certain.

She glared. Waiting. Ready to strike.

Exhaling slowly, she heard the last droid fall to the floor.

*Resolve*. Now was the time to fight.

Tilting her chin up defiantly, Rey waited for Snoke to come to her.


Still she waited.

He was on the other side of the wall. Only feet away.

Rey held her breath as she felt him raise a hand towards the wall. Ready to pull it apart in his search for her.

The sound of a massive ship leaving Hyperspace dangerously close to the planet disrupted the silence. An overwhelming rush of pure darkness. Absolute loathing wafting hard against Rey’s shields.

Hatred.

Terror.

*Sith.*

Lord Vader was here.
Rey felt Snoke rapidly retreat from her hiding spot inside the wall. Relaxing ever so slightly as he fled to his waiting ship far below her.

Letting out a shaky breath, Rey winced as a TIE Fighter came screaming by her. Ears ringing. Jumping as the TIE began firing at the fleeing ship.

She squeezed her eyes shut once more. Focusing on Vader. Trying to communicate with him. Thinking hard about where she was. Warning him not to hit her.

Off in the distance she could still hear the TIE Fighters screaming. Much further away from Rey. Giving chase to the intruder’s fleeing vessel.

The Fortress was silent. Rey’s lip wobbled. The droids must have all been defeated. Killed.

The sound of Vader’s Star Destroyer lifting away from the planet’s surface. A safer distance from the pull of its gravity.

Rey took in another breath.

Waiting. She didn’t know how much time had passed.

She could faintly hear the hum of another ship coming closer to the fortress. A transport vessel, much like the one she arrived here on.

A calming presence wrapping snuggly around Rey.

She began to sob from her spot inside the wall.

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It was almost an hour before Vader retrieved her from inside the wall. He had to allow his
stormtroopers to search for the possibility of a second intruder. He also needed to fill in what had transpired to the Emperor.

The two of them made their way back down towards Vader’s medical facility. Rey’s adrenaline was beginning to wane. She clutched at Vader’s forearm in an attempt to stay on her feet. Her hands were shaking. Knees wobbling.

“I’m dizzy,” she murmured as they reached the entryway into his medical room.

Vader nodded. Helping her back towards her makeshift bed on the floor. “You are dehydrated and exhausted.” He helped her sit down on her little bed. “Possibly going into shock as well.”

Rey nodded once. Her lip wobbling as she remembered the massacre in the hallways. The droids all destroyed. Torn apart or crushed.

SD-2826 had her limbs ripped off, but was the sole survivor. Vader assured Rey he would rebuild her once more and had gently placed her in the training room before shutting her off for the time being.

Now it was just Vader and Rey here. Vader had ordered his ship back to Coruscant without him; in his rush to get to Mustafar, Vader and his ship had left with only half of its crew. The Devastator would be returning the day after tomorrow. At the finish of their time off of rotation.

Rey closed her eyes as she rested her head against the cool wall. Vaguely aware of Vader stepping away from her.

“Here,” his vocoder sounded.

Rey jerked, her eyes blinking open. He held a bottle of water in front of her face.

Reaching for it, she thanked him quietly and began to take small sips.

Vader sat down next to her, handing her a ration bar to offset her energy depletion.
“When you feel up to it, tell me what you know about Snoke,” Vader said to her as he placed his hands in his lap. Trying desperately to be patient.

Rey nodded taking another sip of her water. Closing the lid tightly she set the bottle on her bed between them, before tearing open her ration bar.

Taking a bite, she chewed for a bit before swallowing.

“I don’t know much. I was pretty isolated on Jakku, but what I do know of him I mostly learned from your daughter.” Rey paused to take another drink of water. “He is a dark Force user...your daughter was very clear that he was not a Sith. Humanoid. About seven feet tall. From what she was able to find out about him, she said that when the Empire fell and retreated out to the Unknown Regions, he somehow took the reigns and made the First Order into what he wanted.” She took a bite of her food. “He waited in the shadows for you and the Emperor to take each other out.”

Vader nodded. “He is patient...much like Sidious.”

Rey nodded slowly. “He is referred to as Supreme Leader Snoke...I suppose because ‘Emperor Snoke’ just wasn’t enough for him.” Amusement curled around her. She fought a grin as she continued. “Your daughter said that she was able to sense his darkness around her son before he was even born. She said that Luke told her that everyone had light and dark inside them. That it was nothing to worry about. That it was normal.” Rey sniffed. “Your daughter told me that she could feel Ben trying to pull away from it. From the ribbon of darkness trying to capture him. That he was trying to fight it off.” She shook her head. “She said that because she hadn’t been trained in the Force, she didn’t realize what was happening. That she trusted her brother...even though he was barely trained in it himself.”

Rey cleared her throat. Taking another drink of water. “Your daughter said that she found out through research after her son fell, that Snoke was obsessed with the Skywalker family. He knew your real identity, which was very well hidden, as you know. He knew about Luke and my General being your children.” She shrugged. “I’m not sure what else...he is a bit of a recluse.”

“Do you know why he is obsessed with the Skywalker family?” Vader asked her. He was curious.

Rey frowned. Remembering what Han Solo had said to his son before he was killed. “He is using Ben for his strength in the Force. That’s what his father said to him before…” she sighed. “Other
than that, I don’t know.”

She looked down at her hands clutching her ration bar. “When he showed up here...I recognized his...darkness. It was familiar to me.”

Vader nodded. “It felt like it did during your time. Before you arrived here.”

Rey hummed, taking another sip of water. She was beginning to feel better.

“How long before my daughter gets pregnant?”

Rey frowned. What had Leia said? “After the second Death Star is destroyed...a few months afterwards. Your grandson was born on the day the Galactic Empire surrendered to the Republic.” She hesitated. “About five years from now. Plus or minus a few months.”

“And how old was he when he fell to the Darkside?”

“Twenty three years old.” Rey said quietly. “He spent over twenty three years living with Snoke inside his head before he fell. Before he became Kylo Ren.”

Vader was impressed. “His father was right...he is strong in the Force. He’s a strong person altogether.” He paused, his mask looking at his gloved hands in his lap. “Ben?”

Rey nodded, wiping her mouth. “Named after Ben Kenobi...the name Obi-Wan went by on Tatooine.” She nibbled some more on her ration bar. “He died trying to save your daughter on the Death Star. Distracted you from your son and daughter so they could get away. He hadn’t...used his lightsaber in a while...his skills had atrophied according to Luke.” Rey nodded to herself. “He went in knowing full well he wouldn’t come out of there.”

“He knew I wouldn’t be able to resist fighting him,” Vader responded. “He used himself as bait in order to keep me away from my children.”

A comfortable silence ensued. Broken only by Rey munching on her food or Vader’s breathing. After a few minutes Vader raised a hand, a datapad flying into it from the workbench.
“Have you seen the security feed?” He asked Rey.

She nodded, finishing up her food. “The beginning at least. When he first arrived.” She grabbed her water bottle, taking a sip.

Vader brought it up on his datapad. Watching it carefully. Together they watched Snoke slip into the hangar and make his way towards the entrance to the temple below. They watched as he disappeared from view as he stepped into the temple. A half dozen droids came rushing into view. GD-4545 being notified that a vessel was found just outside the fortress.

Rey watched as he rolled out of view, heading towards Vader’s medical room to notify SD-2826 and to wake her up.

Rey wrapped her arms around herself, already knowing what was about to happen. “When were you notified?”

“Around now.” Vader gestured to the video. “SD-2826 notified me just before you were woken up.” He paused. “Then she notified me that you were able to identify the intruder right here.” Rey watched herself peel out of the medical room, running as fast as she could down the hallway.

Together they watched the droids position themselves for an optimal attack once Snoke exited out of the Sith temple.

“Why did he go into the temple?” Rey asked Vader quietly. “If he is obsessed with you, with your family...why go there and not explore around your fortress instead?”

“There is power in the darkside unimaginable to anyone who hasn’t experienced it firsthand. He was searching for power. More power than he currently has.” Vader gestured towards the video. “You tell me he is no Sith, merely a darkside user. The Sith are the most powerful darkside users, just as the Jedi are the most powerful lightside users.”

Rey nodded slowly. “Or both factions like to believe they are the strongest. The most powerful.”

Vader gave her a shrug, indicating she had a point.
“He...Snoke, I mean...he ordered for the third Death Star — Starkiller Base — to take out the Hosnian System.” She turned her head to look at Vader. “The entire system in a single shot.”

Surprise wafted around Rey. “All of the planets at once? There is the technology for that?”

Rey nodded. “There will be in thirty six years or so from now.”

Vader shook his head. “That doesn’t mean he is stronger than me...or the Emperor. That kind of technology doesn’t illustrate strength. It is strictly there for terror. Intimidation.” He paused. “Why the Hosnian System?”

“It was where the Senate was situated...the New Republic,” Rey explained.

Vader nodded in understanding. Gesturing back to the datapad in his hands, “How long was he in there?”

Rey blew out a breath. She shrugged. “A long time...but at the same time not long enough.” She frowned to herself. “Maybe up until thirty minutes before you arrived.”

“And you hid in the wall the entire time?” Vader asked her quietly. Impressed. “That was a good idea, by the way. I couldn't sense your Force signature either. You shielded yourself extremely well. Snoke has no idea you are Force sensitive.”

“He still sensed me though…”

Vader gave her a nod as he fast forwarded the video recording. “He sensed a living being in a place that was supposed to be empty.” He gestured at the video showing Snoke beginning to take out the droids. “He expected my droids. He didn’t expect you.”

Together they watched as Snoke began to make his way further into the Fortress. The droids making him work to get any closer to Rey.
“Wouldn’t...wouldn’t his actions here make it so you and the Emperor notice him now?” Rey turned to look at Vader. “Me being here in your home changed what happened, didn’t it? In my time, he just stole whatever he did from the Sith temple and got away, didn’t he?”

“Possibly,” Vader conceded. “Or perhaps he waited until I was dead in your timeline before he came here and started poking around.” He turned his focus back to the datapad. Snoke had just defeated the training droids and was now making his way towards Rey hidden in the wall.

The pair of them watching as Snoke held his hand out in front of the wall Rey was hidden inside.

Rey shivered. Wrapping her arms around herself. It had been far too close.

She fought a grin as Snoke began running away from Rey’s location. “You cut it a little close there...in case you were wondering.” She paused, pursing her lips. “Although I can honestly say I have never been more relieved to hear a Star Destroyer drop out of hyperspace...or the screeching of TIE Fighters before in my life.”

Amusement pressed hard against Rey’s shields. “I made the trip in just under two hours. I may have even damaged an engine in my Destroyer dropping out of Hyperspace like we did, so close to the surface.”

Rey nodded. Giving Vader a tired grin. “Thank you.”

Vader shut his datapad off and stood up. “Try to get some rest. I will begin repairing my droids over on the workbench. It will take me awhile to repair them all.” He paused, awkwardly standing before Rey. “Tomorrow we can talk about your experiences here. I will tell you what I’ve heard while on Coruscant.”

Rey gave Vader a tired nod. Hiding a yawn behind her hand. She set her water bottle down beside her bed and pulled her blanket up as she laid down.

Closing her eyes, she fidgeted for a few moments trying to get comfortable. Sighing she began to drift off.

She could’ve sworn she felt her blanket get pulled up a bit higher. Ever so gently, she was being tucked in.
“Is this alright?” Vader’s vocoder said from the other side of the room.

Rey blinked her eyes open to bright lights and drills humming. Well-rested for the first time in days. She had slept through the night.

“Yes, Master Vader. This is acceptable.” A droid responded to Vader’s query. SD-2826.

Rey gasped quietly, sitting up in her little bed on the floor. “Essdee?” She untangled herself from her blankets and made her way over towards Vader and his personal droid.

“Miss Rey!” SD-2826 wobbled in excitement. “It is so good to see you.”

“Hold still,” Vader chastised his droid quietly. “You’re not all back together yet.”

SD-2826 was standing before Vader with an arm stretched up above her. Vader was attaching the last piece of her protective cover underneath her raised arm.

“Is this better than before?” Vader asked his droid. “Better mobility?”

Rey watched as SD-2826 maneuvered around. Contorting as much as she could.

“It is perfect, Master Vader.” The droid confirmed.

Vader gave his droid a single nod of his helmet. “I need you to be my guard for the rest of the day. I will be with Rey, having a discussion… cleaning up everything. I need you to keep watch for anyone who enters. I need you to notify me should anyone approach my fortress.”

“Yes Master Vader.” SD-2826 said enthusiastically.
“Where are your other guards?” Rey asked him quietly. Curious.

Vader turned, finally acknowledging Rey. “Dead. They were no longer needed.”

Rey raised an eyebrow. “That, or were they no longer trusted?”

Vader gave her a nod. “That too.” He quirked his helmet towards SD-2826, who looked down at the floor. “They were asking questions. I needed to terminate them. They were loyal to the Emperor. His eyes here, if you will.”

“And… you get away with killing the Emperor’s eyes?” Rey queried. “Wouldn’t that make him suspicious?”

Amusement pressed against Rey’s shields. Vader shook his head. “It would be suspicious if I didn’t terminate them.”

Rey frowned.

“They were not good people, Rey,” Vader reminded her. “I am not a good person. I am a Sith. You don’t become a Sith by being nice.” Vader placed his hands on his hips, watching her closely. “Get changed, and washed up. I will meet you in the training room. We must talk about some things.”

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Rey stepped into the training room, spotting Vader with his back towards her and his hands on his hips. He was looking down at the pile of destroyed droids. Annoyed.

“He could have just shut them off with the Force. Or even just pulled out their firing mechanism with the Force to get them to stop attacking him,” Vader said to her. “He didn’t have to destroy them completely. This was overkill… especially for a mere curiosity.” He kicked at a flattened security droid. “I can’t fix this. It isn’t even possible to pick out some scrap parts to rebuild another droid from it.” He shook his head. “It’s garbage now.”

“Maybe he didn’t know how to,” Rey offered quietly. Her heart breaking at all the damage in front
of her. “You said that the Sith are the strongest darksiders. Your daughter said he wasn’t a Sith. Maybe he doesn’t know that he can just wave his hand and shut down droids instantly. Maybe he was never taught that? Perhaps he doesn’t know that they all have a kill switch.”

“Or he didn’t care,” Vader supplied, shaking his head. His disdain was apparent.

Rey sighed, looking sadly at the droids. “Some will still be able to be rebuilt. The ones that aren’t squished flat. I — I can help you rebuild them if you want. If you need help. I rebuilt a flight simulator I found on a Destroyer and put it in my home. My AT-AT. It’s how I learned how to fly.”

Vader turned to look at her. “Really?”

Rey nodded. “I know it isn’t the same thing, but I also kept up maintenance on my speeder that I had. And I was able to figure out which parts in the crashed ships were important enough to get food. I know my way around mechanics.” She paused. “I learned to read by reading technical manuals and maintenance logs. By reading manuals for the various Imperial ships.” She shrugged. “I’ve never made a droid before… but I can help you if you need it. I’ve read enough about them to know my way around.”

Vader nodded. “I will get your help. But later. We must speak first.”

Rey swallowed. Nervous. Had he somehow found out about her anger? Had SD-2826 informed him when Vader rebuilt her? “Alright.” Her throat was dry.

Vader quirked his helmet at her. “Why are you nervous?”

Rey scoffed at him. “What makes you think I’m nervous?” Her heart was racing. Palms sweaty. She placed her hands on her hips.

He gestured to her. “It’s very obvious. What’s wrong?”

Rey shook her head. “You tell me. We can talk about my time here afterwards. I think it’s fair. I’ve been out of the loop for almost two weeks.”
Vader watched her closely. Not responding. He shrugged to himself. “The Death Star is practically complete. Only a few more parts need to be installed. Which should be happening over the next few days.” He crossed his arms across his chest. “The Emperor knows there is a spy giving information to the rebels. Apparently one of his own informants has told him that the Rebels now know of the superweapon.”

Rey’s heart stuttered to a stop. “Does he know that there is a flaw in the design?”

Vader shook his head. “Not that I am aware of. And I am not even certain if he believes the spy to be an engineer involved in the construction of the Death Star. But, it is the most logical place to have a spy. He knows this.”

Rey nodded slowly. “What did he say exactly? The informant?”

Vader looked down towards the floor. “He said that the leaders of the rebellion know of the first Death Star. His informant told him that Kenobi and Luke Skywalker are now with the rebellion. That Kenobi and Chancellor Mothma have been having private meetings. That Kenobi is training Luke in the Force.” Vader looked at Rey. “The informant has gone dark. Has missed multiple call-ins. The Emperor believes that he has been found out and is likely terminated.”

“Do you agree?” Rey asked him quietly.

Vader gave her a nod. “If Kenobi felt the spy was a threat to the safety of Luke and my daughter — yes...absolutely. He wouldn’t hesitate.” He paused, lost in a memory. “He would have used his appearance to catch the spy off guard. He doesn’t look like a threat. At all. He would have caught him unaware. He would have figured out just how much information the spy gave Sidious. Then he would’ve disposed of him.” Another pause. “Yes, he is a Jedi Knight. But he was also a General in the Clone Wars. Most people have forgotten that. He survived on Tatooine for close to twenty years without anyone telling the Emperor about him. That wasn’t by chance or luck — that was because he terminated each and every single threat that tracked him to that planet.”

Rey nodded slowly. “Their mistake.”

Amusement pressed against Rey’s shields. “Indeed.”

Rey swallowed. She still felt uneasy. “Was there anything else?”
Vader looked down at the floor. “When we get back to my Destroyer you must pack a go-bag. I believe you will need to flee sooner rather than later.” He looked back up at Rey. “I have an uneasy feeling. Intuition, if you will.”

Rey nodded once more. “Has something happened that has made you feel this way?”

Vader shook his head. “No. Nothing at all… which is why I think you should prepare to leave on short notice. I assume you know the location of the Rebel base.”

Rey hummed. “I do.”

Vader gave her a curt nod. “Good.” He gestured to Rey, indicating she should make her way over to the screen in the wall. He followed her over and began pressing buttons. “I would like you to take a look at your training that you did over the last few days and tell me where you can improve.”

Rey looked down at the floor, feeling Vader’s gaze on her. “I don’t need to see the video. I know where I need to improve.” She shut her eyes tight, sighing. “I let my anger get the best of me. If your training droid was at full power I would’ve been limbless rolling around on the floor.”

Vader’s understanding hummed around her. “You are situated above a Sith Temple. It’s not anything to be ashamed of, your anger.”

Rey shook her head. “I’m always angry though. I usually just ignore it, tuck it away for another day but,” she shrugged. “I had a difficult time doing that here.”

“Did you wish to talk about it?” Vader uncertainty was curling around her. “You can voice your anger at me if you like. I won’t judge. I won’t tell you that your anger is wrong. Or unjustified.” A pause. Uncertainty and understanding mingling around Rey. “What are you angry about?”

Rey’s lip quivered. She looked down at the floor. Sighing as she looked back up at him. No one had ever asked her before to voice her thoughts. No one cared enough to ask. She took the time to gather her thoughts. “I am angry at my parents for selling me off to Unkar Plutt. For rejecting me. I am angry at your daughter for sending me to Luke practically the second she found out that I was Force sensitive. I am angry at your son for refusing to teach me. He taught everyone but he wouldn’t teach me.” Her voice shook with emotion; it stung, what Luke had done. Or refused to do. Rey shook her head. “I am angry — no — I am livid at the New Republic. The leaders of the rebellion.” She looked down at her hands in her lap. “I hate them.”
“Why?” Vader was curious.

“They did nothing.” Rey said quietly, shaking her head. “They didn’t help anyone. Just themselves. They changed Empire Day to Remembrance Day for your daughter’s home planet that was destroyed by the Death Star. For all the lives lost. They celebrated the end of the Galactic Empire and the creation of the Republic Alliance. The New Republic. For years and years it was celebrated.” She looked at Vader after a pause. “Do you know what they did on Jakku?”

Understanding wafted hard against Rey.

She nodded. “Absolutely nothing. They didn’t even erect a kripping statue to mark the end of the Empire. The location of the final battle.” Rey laughed humorlessly. “They did set up a government, which lasted less than a year before Niima the Hutt took over, and then Plutt a short time later. Their government was a sham; there was no representation anywhere. The Senate ignored the people of Jakku. No resources there for them to take. Apparently people are less important than goods.” Rey huffed. “I was invisible until I stole a karking ship. The First Order noticed me before they did. And then — and then — your daughter assumed I wanted to help her. After everything that I survived on my own, she expected me to help her when her fancy Republic did nothing to help me.” Rey shook her head. “The only person who has ever offered to help me in my entire life is you. A kripping Sith.” Rey slapped a tear away. When had she started crying? “It says a lot.” Her voice broke.

Her anger was threatening to break through her shields. She shut her eyes tight, trying to repair them before they shattered completely. Overwhelmed from voicing her thoughts. Her experiences. She felt a hand reach out to grasp her own.

“Just focus on my hand to anchor yourself, Rey.” Vader was trying to calm her down. His understanding was wrapping around her. His comfort. Security.

Rey took a deep breath and began enforcing her walls. Welding together the cracked durasteel. The action of building something — fixing something — bringing her comfort.

After a few minutes of intense repair Rey opened her eyes.

Vader was watching her. His helmet quirked slightly to the side. “How did you repair them?”
“I welded together the cracks.” She paused. “That’s alright for now, right?”

Vader nodded before looking down at her hand still held in his own. “I understand completely why you are angry. The original Republic was the same as your new one.” He paused. Rey could feel his hesitation. “I was missed by the Jedi Order because Tatooine was not part of the Republic. I missed the mandatory blood testing they carried out on the Republic planets searching for Force sensitive infants. The normal age they take Force sensitive children is very young. They didn’t find me until I was nine. And that was solely because they needed a part for their damaged ship.” He shifted slightly, uncomfortable from sharing part of his past. “I do not know what I can say for you to be able to dispel your anger. But I am not disregarding it. I’m not brushing off what you feel. I’m not going to tell you to let go of your anger. It didn’t work for me.” He gestured to his life support suit. “I doubt it would work much for you.”

He squeezed her hand before letting it go. “We can, however, rebuild my droids.”

Rey nodded. “I’d like that. I find fixing things calms me down. Gets me to focus on other stuff.”

Vader gestured towards the heaping pile. “Grab some parts. Security droids first.”

Together they made their way back down towards the medical facility. Droid parts and damaged droids floating in front of them. Rey with her hand outstretched, a small grin on her face. Vader walking slowly behind her, watching his Padawan’s progress.

Rey came to a stop in front of the entrance into the room and frowned. She couldn’t figure out how to turn the parts to fit into the room.

“How?”

Vader placed his left hand on her shoulder. His right hand reached out above Rey’s. “Watch.” Slowly and carefully the entire pile of droids and droid parts began to turn into the entrance way. His fingers wiggled as if tapping the side of the steering apparatus of a starship to make the corner. “You see?”

Rey nodded as she watched the parts slide through the entrance. Slowly following in behind them. Together she and Vader maneuvered the parts towards the work bench, before carefully setting everything onto the floor.
They had been at it for two days, rebuilding Vader’s droids. His Destroyer was once again hovering over Mustafar, waiting for an assignment.

Vader and Rey were able to salvage three fully repaired droids, which were now patrolling the fortress. The other two were far too damaged to repair completely. They were however useful for scrap parts should anything need replacing on the other droids.

That was what Rey was now working on. Scavenging the workable parts. Vader was finally resting in his bacta tank. Meditating.

Rey looked over towards Vader floating in his bacta. Limbless. His medical droids had removed his armour and life support system. Had removed his cybernetics before strapping him into his tank. He hadn’t ordered Rey to leave the room, something that surprised her greatly. She had stood in front of him and watched as his droids went to work. His yellow eyes hadn’t left hers as he had his helmet, armour, and cybernetics removed.

She didn’t feel pity — he had gotten what he deserved. She knew it, and so did he. But she was intrigued. She didn’t understand why his wounds hadn’t healed entirely. His burns.

If she understood the properties of bacta properly from what she had read in her Imperial manuals during her life on Jakku, his burns should’ve been fully healed. The wound on his head should’ve been closed, with barely a scar left behind. Synthskin was not a new thing either.

His bacta was garbage. *Diluted*. That was the conclusion that Rey came to. He had access to the best the galaxy could offer, yet he was stuck using product that could be found on some backwater Outer Rim planet.

Rey shook her head at the implication. The Emperor must have had something to do with it. The manipulative bastard. He was holding Vader’s life as collateral, keeping him just able enough to always need him. His failure in defeating Kenobi. Nineteen years later, and Vader was still paying for it.

Rey hummed to herself as she went back to work pulling apart the droid on the workbench in front of her. Why would the Emperor force Vader to need him? It clicked instantly. She set the pieces down. Rubbing her face.
Because Vader was stronger than the Emperor. Because Anakin was stronger than the Emperor. He was a threat to his Empire and Palpatine felt he needed to neutralize him. To put a leash on him.

Master and apprentice. Master and slave.


“Miss Rey!” SD-2826 rolled into the room. “Director Krennic is heading down to Vader Fortress. He wishes to speak with Master Vader. Immediately.”

Rey swore once more as she made her way closer to Vader’s bacta tank. She tapped the glass to get Vader’s attention.

His eyes shot open. He quirked his head at Rey’s interruption of his rest.

“Krennic,” Rey said to him in response.

Vader rolled his eyes, sneering from behind his breathing mask before giving Rey a nod of his head.

She typed the commands into his tank. Medical droids situating themselves to attend to their patient.

Rey stepped back to watch them work. To give them room. “SD-2826, can you greet Director Krennic please. We don’t want him wandering around, letting his curiosity get the best of him.”

“Certainly Miss Rey.” The droid rolled back out of the room off to greet their unwanted guest.

Vader’s armour was replaced. Standing tall once more. His helmet was slowly making its way closer to him from above.
“Three, two, and one. Deep breath.” A medical droid pulled the oxygen mask off of Vader’s face. The helmet coming together around his head.

He was Vader once more.

Rey stepped back.

“Wait here,” Vader’s vocoder sounded. “I won’t be long.” He made his way out of his medical facility. Cape billowing behind him as he left to speak with the man overseeing the construction of the Death Star.
Chapter 9

“How long do we wait?”

Vader set the arm of a training droid back down on his workbench. “Until the Emperor, or Tarkin, tells me to do something. I’ve been pulled off searching for Luke for obvious reasons. I can’t just travel around without a purpose. It’s only been a few hours since Krennic left.”

Rey nodded. She knew this. He had explained this to her before. She was nervous — Grand Moff Tarkin had taken over the operation of the Death Star. Krennic had visited Vader to try to get his support. To try to get the Emperor’s support. He had lost control of his weapon. He had lost his standing within the Galactic Empire.

Rey stood up from her seat next to Vader and began walking along the bench. She couldn’t focus. Couldn’t sit still. The Death Star was complete. She didn’t know how much time had passed between Tarkin taking control of it and him firing on the Rebels on Scarif. Leia never told her.

She stopped in front of Vader’s damaged helmet. The Force telling her to look at it. That it was important. She focused on the helmet, quirking her head. The mask was split underneath the eyepiece, down towards the neck guard and vocoder. Burned. Rey’s fingers touched the melted durasteel. *A lightsaber did this.*

Gasping, she turned to look at Vader who was watching her. “A lightsaber damaged your helmet. That helmet.” She pointed at it. “It’s important. The Force is saying it’s important.” She took a breath. “Who did it?”

Vader turned on his stool, now facing Rey completely. “Ahsoka Tano.”

Rey’s eyes widened in shock. Ahsoka Tano was the Rebel’s first fulcrum. She had no idea the fulcrum was a Jedi. Leia had never said that to her. *She hadn’t known,* the Force whispered to her. She ran through what Leia had told her. She knew that she had gone missing for years, before returning just after the Battle of Endor. Everyone in high command in the rebellion had thought she was dead. That she had been killed. *She didn’t have access to a ship to get off of the planet she was stuck on. No communications.* That was what Leia had told her. That she was marooned for years before finding a ride off planet. *Years.*

“You know her.” Vader stood up from his seat.
Rey shook her head. “Your daughter mentioned her to me. I didn’t know that she is a Jedi.”

Vader shook his head. “She’s no Jedi. She abandoned the Jedi Order. Saw the corruption and left. She was falsely accused of treason and stripped of her standing before evidence was found that proved she was framed. The Jedi Order had banished her. She refused their offer to return to the Order and left.”

Rey quirked her head at Vader. He was leaving something out. “Who was she to you?”

Vader looked down at the floor. “She was Anakin’s Padawan. My Padawan.”

Rey nodded slowly. “She showed up after the destruction of the second Death Star.” Vader’s helmet quirked up, now focusing entirely on Rey. “You didn’t kill her. She was stuck on some planet for years before she was able to get a ride off of it. Before she was able to make it back to the rebellion.” She paused. “What happened?”

Vader crossed his arms across his chest. Rey could feel his mind whirring. “Malachor. Sith temple. We fought. She hit me with her saber.” He gestured to his helmet. “When we were fighting, a portal opened up behind her. A...vortex. Someone reached out and pulled her through it just before the floor we were standing on collapsed under our weight.” He put his hands on his hips. “I fell down through the temple and had to climb out without my respirator working properly. She had just disappeared in front of me.”

“Time travel.” The Force howled in agreement. “But instead of going back in time like me, she went ahead.” Rey grinned. “How many years ago did she get the drop on you, her former Master?”

Vader quirked his helmet. Annoyed, but also amused. “Three years, I think.” He pointed a finger at Rey. “You must find her. When you go to your Rebels, that is the first thing you’ll do. Take Kenobi with you.” He paused. “She can help you.”

Rey nodded, about to respond when a buzzer sounded.

Vader held up a hand to stop her from speaking. “Voice call only.” The Holo opened in the center of the room. Vader took note of the ship identification. “Tarkin,” he said in greeting.
“Lord Vader. I would appreciate it if you could come to Scarif. The Rebel scum have infiltrated the Imperial Archives. They need to be taken care of.” A pause. “I am on my way there now. In my Death Star, as I’m sure you’ve noticed.” The man was bragging, obvious to everyone from his tone of voice.

Rey bit her lip. It was happening. Right now.

“I will be there in a few hours,” Vader responded coolly. He terminated the call before turning back around to look at Rey. “This is it.”

Rey gave him a curt nod before making her way towards the durasteel storage container that she had arrived here in. She stopped before stepping into the container. *Tell him now.* Looking back up at Vader waiting to close the lid on her. “Leia,” Rey said quietly to him. “Your daughter’s name is Leia Organa.”

Shock pushed against Rey. *Alderaan. She’s the princess of Alderaan.*

Rey nodded, stepping into the container and kneeling on top of her folded blankets.

Vader stood above Rey for a moment. Not moving. “Thank you for telling me. I will make sure she is safe. I will get her back to your Rebels. I won’t hurt her. I promise.”

The lid snapped shut.

The container began rolling. Vader pulling it. Walking quickly. Hurrying towards his waiting transport vessel.

Barking at SD-2826 along the way. Issuing orders to his rebuilt security droids.

Up the ramp Rey rolled. Coming to a jerky stop inside the vessel.

More talking. SD-2826 was on the ship with Rey and Vader.
The engines started up. Humming around Rey.

Her container wobbled as Vader pulled the transport vessel out of the hanger and up towards his Destroyer waiting for him in the atmosphere above.

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“Set course for Scarif,” Vader said in greeting to the Captain of the Devastator as he made his way down the ramp of the transport vessel. His droid pulling Rey’s container directly behind him. He hated this man. His fear was tasteless. Pathetic. He didn’t deserve to captain the ship. He needed to find a way to relieve him of his duties.

Montferrat would be a much better fit for the role. He was loyal to him. Always had been.

Vader made his way towards the elevators. He needed to drop Rey off into his quarters. She needed to get her go-bag ready. She needed to leave. The Force was telling him it was far too dangerous for her here. Around him.

Vader stepped into the elevator, SD-2826 rolled in after him. Rey’s storage container between the two of them.

He sighed. He would listen to Kenobi. He would let Rey go.

Thinking back to what Rey told him on Mustafar. Leia. Luke and Leia. Anakin’s children. His children. He didn’t know how to keep them safe. How to protect Leia from...himself. From Tarkin.

He had destroyed Alderaan in Rey’s timeline. Billions of people gone in a flash. Tarkin. He sneered behind his mask. He wanted to strangle him. Kill him with his bare hands.

The elevator door slid open. He and his droid made their way towards his quarters. Hurrying. He needed to get to the command center of his ship as soon as possible. He needed to know what everyone else knew before entering into the battle.

He needed to prepare.
He waved a hand. The doors to his quarters slid open, allowing entrance. He made his way over to his meditation chamber. That door too slid open. He gestured for SD-2826 to enter before him.

Following after the droid, Vader popped open the lid of the storage container. Rey was huddled tight. Shaking.

Vader winced. He had forgotten about his shields. His hatred for Tarkin was permeating her walls.

“Sorry. I forgot.” A pathetic excuse. He pulled his emotions back into himself. Held out a hand to help her out of her container. Her small hand slid into his own. He pulled her up onto her feet. “You must pack.” He walked over towards a cupboard in the wall, opening the door, he pulled out a large travelling bag. “Fit what you can in here. Try to get your shields strong once more. We are headed into battle. I do not know how many Imperial Officers will be there. There will be a lot of hate. A lot of anger. You need to be strong. You must remain calm.”

Rey gave him a nod of her head. “I will.”

Vader returned her nod. “I believe this is the time for you to leave me. This is the time for you to go to your Rebels.” Rey nodded in agreement. She too had felt it in the Force. “As soon as I have a window to get you out of here, I will come and get you. I will get you a ship capable of life support and hyperspace travel.” He paused. “I will also remove the tracker on the ship. Don’t let me forget that.”

Rey nodded once more. “Alright.”

He held up a hand and made his way out of the room. Reaching for his datapad he turned it on. Opening the file he had on Rey’s training, he began to type a note to Kenobi, touching on the spy inside the rebellion. If there was one, there would likely be another. The Emperor liked his contingency plans. Kenobi needed to know. He needed to protect his children.

Vader finished typing, telling himself he wasn’t a spy. He was only doing it to protect his kids. Family before anything else. His Tatooine upbringing ringing loud inside his head.

Family was everything. It always would be.
Shaking his head he returned to Rey’s room. She was folding her clothing and placing them into her bag. “Take this as well.” He held out his datapad to her. “Your training for Kenobi to see.”

Rey clutched the datapad in her hands.

Vader looked down at the floor. Hesitant. “What you said to me on Mustafar. About your life. Your experiences.” He looked back up at his Padawan. “Tell Mothma. Perhaps if she knows what happened to you she will change her actions. The Republic Alliance’s actions. Perhaps she’ll help Jakku. Its people.” He paused. “Padmé was close with her. Her and Bail Organa. It’s something that she would’ve done...or tried to do.”

Rey nodded. “I will. After me and Obi-Wan get Ahsoka back.”

He nodded. “I must leave now. I need to know just what I’m entering into.” He turned to leave. Making his way towards the door.

“Wait!” Rey’s voice called out. She stepped closer to him. “I know it may not be possible...but if you can...can you try not to kill any rebels.”

Vader slowly turned to face her. She was asking a lot.

“I’m not saying for you not to hurt them. I understand you’ll probably have to. I’m just asking for you not to slaughter everyone.” Rey’s eyes were wide open. Glassy. She cared far too much. “Please.”

He quirked his head. “No promises.”

The hope disappeared from her eyes. She gave him another nod. Curt. “Of course.” She turned back to continue her packing.

Vader paused for a moment before leaving his quarters. He felt like a shit. Shaking his head at himself, he left the room.

He had work to do. A battle to plan. A daughter to protect.
Vader rocked slightly on his feet as the *Devastator* came out of hyperspace. The damaged engine was making their exits out of hyperspace sloppy. More jerking of his Destroyer. He winced behind his mask — his pilots had hit something. Another ship.

The battle was in full force. The fear and anger was saturating. Overwhelming. He was in close proximity to the Rebels.

“My Lord! We’ve hit the *Profundity*!” An officer yelled out to him. Relaying word from the cockpit.

Vader nodded. “Prepare to board momentarily.” He and a group of his troopers were waiting to board the Rebel ship, via orders from Tarkin. The Rebels had intercepted the Death Star plans. Tarkin was furious. Had already fired on Scarif. It was Vader’s responsibility to get them back.

He smirked to himself. He had a job to do, far different from the one Tarkin assigned to him.

He needed to protect his daughter. He needed to make sure she got away from here.

After a quick jaunt over, he and his troopers made their way into the damaged rebel ship. Vader leading — as he always did. He paused, trying to get a sense of where everyone was. A small group in the command center. The obvious place.

He quirked his head. A second docking bay not in the design plans. Rebels trying to flee inside a smaller vessel. A ship inside a ship. He grinned behind his mask. It was smart. Sneaky.

He directed his soldiers to follow him as he silently made his way towards the rebels. Hesitating for only a moment at a junction in the hallway. He needed to do this alone. Without his troopers. Less questions asked. Less seeing eyes.

“Storm the command center of this ship. Leave the rest to me.” His troopers peeled off away from him without hesitation. Marching in the direction of the command center.
Vader continued towards the docking bay. He was opening himself up in the Force, searching for a familiarity. Searching for his daughter. He could barely sense her. Kenobi had taught her how to build her shields up. He had taught her well.

He paused at another junction and flicked off the lighting on his suit’s life support system. Something was wrong. The rebels were panicking.

He palmed his saber and turned around the corner. The hallway was almost entirely dark. He could see a couple of rebels trying to pry open the doors at the end of the hallway. The light from the smaller ship bleeding through the window.

The doors were jammed. Damaged from the collision. The Profundity’s mechanical system was failing, preventing the rebels from escaping.

Vader reached out his left hand. Igniting his saber with his right.

Blaster fire rang out. Yelling could be heard.

He twirled his saber, deflecting the blaster fire away from himself and into the walls. He began approaching the rebels firing at him, remembering what Rey had asked of him.

He jerked his saber at the closest rebel, slicing the hand holding the blaster clean off. The man screamed. Falling to the floor. A couple of other rebels met the same fate. Vader Force pushed them all with his left hand towards the doorway that was still jammed up.

Another rebel lost most of his leg. Vader once again Force pushed him towards the door.

A fool came out of nowhere charging at Vader, forgoing any sort of weapon. Idiot. Vader pushed him up into the ceiling, holding him there for a moment before running his saber through the ceiling and man. One terminated. He hoped Rey would understand. The Rebels couldn’t afford having a rash-acting soldier. It was far too risky for everyone else involved.

The last rebel still standing on this side of the door was reaching towards it. A data card in his hand. The door had been pried open a few inches.
“Take it.” He pleaded to the man on the other side of the door. “Take it.”

Vader stopped directly behind him and swept his left hand to the side. The door crunched open. The rebels could flee.

He Force pushed the injured rebels through the doorway. The man clutching the data card turned his head to look at Vader. Shock evident on his face.

“Go.” Vader said to him. “Tell your pilot to keep tight underneath my Destroyer while you get your hyperspace coordinates set up. You shouldn’t be shot at that way.” He quirked his helmet at the man who had yet to react to what he had just heard. “Go...before I change my mind. Keep your princess safe. Keep Leia safe.”

“What?”

“Go!” Vader barked at him. “Get out of here right now!”

The rebel nodded, stepping into the waiting ship. The injured rebels were groaning from their injuries, struggling to make their way further into their escape vessel. The rebel who lost a leg was being pulled into the waiting ship. The Tantive IV. Bail Organa’s ship.

Movement in front of Vader forced his attention away from the rebels in front of him. He looked up towards the distraction. An angel dressed all in white stared back at him. Leia. She had heard him telling the rebels to flee. To protect her.

She was scared. Confused. Cautious.

She had gotten a lot bigger than when Vader last saw her. Older. She was no longer the tiny little girl running up to him and hugging his legs as he and the other Imperial officers carried out systematic searches on Alderaan’s royal family. He had ignored the longing he felt then. Assumed he was just weak.

He couldn’t ignore it now. It was incredibly obvious — his connection to her.
Vader took a step backwards. He didn’t want his daughter to see him like this. He didn’t want her to see the monster.

He disengaged his lightsaber, hooking it back onto his belt. Turned around and left the Rebels to flee. He couldn’t look back. He wouldn’t.

He needed to get back to his men.

~ | ~

Vader stood in the command center of Tarkin’s Death Star. It was traveling through hyperspace towards Alderaan. Someone on his own Destroyer had identified the fleeing Rebel vessel as belonging to Bail Organa.

Tarkin wanted revenge.

“You must listen to me,” Vader argued with the commander of the superweapon. “You can use the Death Star as a threat. But to completely obliterate Alderaan is a poor move. It is a Core world. Other worlds will notice. They will revolt; join in with the rebels.”

“They will bow to the strength of the Empire!” Tarkin countered venomously. “Tell me, Lord Vader: are you attempting to take control of my weapon? I thought you were against the construction of something so powerful.” The bastard had the nerve to grin at him. “The Emperor agrees that we must set an example for all the treasonous worlds to see. Alderaan will pay the price for aligning with the terrorists.”

Vader ground his teeth together. His jaw clenched tight. He pointed a gloved finger at Tarkin. “It is foolish. It is overkill. It is wrong.”

The command center went dead silent. The bustling of officers preparing for battle ceased. The room was shocked at what they had heard from the Emperor’s right hand man.

Tarkin grinned at Vader. “I’ll be sure to let the Emperor to know what you think.” An alarm sounded, indicating the upcoming arrival of their plotted destination. Alderaan came into view.
directly in front of them. “But first, I must set an example. Prepare the weapon for full strength. Alderaan must pay the price.”

A hum started. The weapon had begun powering up. Vader was terrified. Had Leia gone home, or had she gone back to the Rebel Base? The fact that he hadn’t captured her, wasn’t currently torturing her, forced him to realize that neither himself or Rey would know what action she took. They didn’t know what the current Rebel plan was.

Vader hoped his daughter and her Rebels fled back to the Rebel Base, wherever it was located. For entirely selfish reasons, he hoped that Leia wasn’t one of the souls down on Alderaan about to take their last breath. That she wasn’t one of the billions down below. He focused his attention on the officers surrounding the two of them. He couldn’t let his panic overwhelm him.

It had been just over three hours since the *Tantive IV* fled Scarif. How long would it take them to find the flaw? To find the new location of the Death Star? How long did it take for the weapon to reach full strength?

Vader left the command center. He didn’t want to be around anyone when Alderaan was obliterated. He didn’t think he’d be able to stay standing when billions of lives were ended all at once.

He thought of Rey, still hidden on his Star Destroyer. Still high above Scarif. She would shatter to pieces when Alderaan was destroyed. He should’ve stayed with her. Next to her, making sure her shields hid her from the monsters within the Empire.

He stepped into an empty meeting room and leaned over on the table. Trying to think of a way out of this. Shaking his head — it was far, far too late to do anything. Alderaan would be destroyed in minutes. He couldn’t stop it. Tarkin was speaking over the loudspeaker for all to hear. Telling everyone where they were, what was about to happen. He was broadcasting over the Holonet for the Galaxy to hear.

Vader tuned him out. He didn’t want to listen. He turned on a computer in the wall along the side of the room and grabbed an empty datacard sitting next to the screen. He quickly brought up the central database for the Empire. He couldn’t save Alderaan, but maybe, just maybe he could help in another way. His eyes grew large behind his mask. He had access to everything. Names. Places. *Projects*.

Yes. He’d start there. *Future and Incomplete Projects* was the next thing he selected. His eyes widened even more. There were hundreds — *thousands* — of files loading. Rey telling him about
the second Death Star running through his head. Telling him about the third one built over thirty years from now.

He scrolled through the list. It was alphabetized — thank the Force for small miracles. He slowed his scrolling when he hit words beginning with the letter ‘D’. Scrolling, scrolling.

Tarkin was still blabbing over the speaker.

He scrolled a bit slower.

Yes! There it was. DS-2.

Vader plugged in the datacard. Copied the file to the disk. He continued to scroll through the various projects lined up as the file slowly transferred to the datacard. He couldn’t see the third Death Star plans. Starkiller Base. He’d scroll to the appropriate letter. Perhaps it would be labeled the same as it was in Rey’s time.

The computer gave a quiet beep, indicating the second Death Star file was copied entirely.

Vader continued scrolling until a word on the computer screen stopped him in his tracks.

Jakku.

He clicked open the file. Reading as quickly as he could, he was trying to gain an understanding of why the Emperor chose Jakku of all places. The words were flashing before his eyes, without comprehending exactly just what he was reading. It took a bit longer for his brain to catch up. To understand the implications.

“Shit.”

The Death Star fired at Alderaan.

“Shit,” Vader repeated, grasping onto the wall. He needed to sit down. He popped out the data card
and shut off the computer, before collapsing in a chair situated around the table.

He could barely breathe. He could feel each and every single soul parish all at once.

He threw up his shields in an attempt to protect himself. He tucked the data card into his belt. He needed to give it to Rey.

Rey.

“Shit.” A third time, just for good measure.

Vader didn’t know how long he sat at the table. Minutes. Hours perhaps.

Alarms started blaring. Vader jerked back to the present. Once again aware of his surroundings.

He stood up from the table, leaving the room quickly.

A two pilots sped by him, heading towards a hanger.

“What’s happened?”

The two pilots slid to a stop. “The rebels...they’re attacking us in fighters.”

Vader nodded. He motioned for the two pilots to follow. “You’re with me.”

~ | ~

Vader was flying above the Death Star heading towards the trench that the exhaust port was housed. He radioed into the command center, getting them to stop the cannons firing. Vader and his two pilots would deal with the rebels themselves.
He opened himself up to the Force once more, searching desperately for Luke.

Three rebel x-wings entered into the trench in front of Vader. Vader slid in behind them. His squadron behind him, following his lead.

He sped up, trying to get closer to the pilots. Trying to find his son.

Flickering in the Force. Vader was too overwhelming for someone ahead of him. Threatening to shatter their walls. Luke was with this squadron.

Shots were fired from one of his own squadron pilots. A rebel x-wing went down.

Vader hissed. It wasn’t Luke, thank the Force.

Closer they were getting to the exhaust port.

Luke still wasn’t opening himself up to the Force. He was hiding. Unsure.


A second x-wing was shot down.

“Fuck!” Vader should’ve just found his TIE and went out by himself.

Fear was pulsing now. Luke was beginning to reach out. Opening himself up to the Force.

Vader pulled in front of one of his squadron pilots, flicked on his rear guns and fired at the pilot. Taking them out of commission.
He moved over towards the other squadron pilot, readying to do the same to him, when that pilot was shot at from above. Taken out completely.

The spinning TIE Fighter almost slammed into Vader, he needed to pull out of the trench to avoid getting hit.

Vader looked around, trying to figure out who had shot at them. Quickly he spotted the Corellian freighter sailing above the trench. Having his son’s back. *Legendary in my time*, was what Rey had told him.

He grinned. He understood now why that was the case.


Vader pulled up as well, as far as he could get from the Death Star before it exploded in a fiery ball. The shockwave rocking hard against Vader’s TIE Advanced.

He looked around. He was alone. Surrounded by an asteroid field. A shattered Alderaan.

He began flicking through his flight computer, trying to figure out a place to go to when a Star Destroyer exited out of hyperspace in front of him. *Sloppily exited*. It was his ship.

He radioed in. Identifying himself before making his way towards the hanger of his ship.

He needed to get Rey out of here.

*Now.*

Vader landed his TIE in the hanger and removed his harness. Popping open the door, he climbed out of his fighter.

“My Lord,” the captain sniveled at him. “The Emperor is on his way. He wishes to speak with you.”
Vader quirked his head at the man. Still walking towards the elevators. “Was it you who informed Tarkin of the identity of the ship the Rebels were fleeing on above Scarif?”

The man grinned. “It was, my Lord.”

Vader ignited his lightsaber and drove his blade through the man without missing a step.

“Montferrat...congratulations on your promotion.”

Montferrat gave him a nod. “Thank you Lord Vader.” He stepped around the body of the former captain.

“How far away is the Emperor?” Vader stepped into the elevator.

Montferrat hesitated. “An hour...at most.” A pause. “We’ve been ordered to wait here for him.”

Vader nodded. “Keep my TIE prepped for flight. I must see someone off before he arrives.”

“Yes, my Lord.” He left Vader alone, hurrying back towards the hanger. The elevator door slid closed.

Vader waited impatiently as the elevator made its way up to his floor. The door slid open after some time and he rushed down the hallway towards his quarters.

Waving the doors open he barged into the room. The door to his meditation chamber slid open.

Rey was waiting with her go-bag slung over her shoulder.

“Alderaan is gone,” she said to him in greeting.
He gestured for her to follow him out of his quarters. “It is. I couldn’t stop Tarkin from firing.”

The two of them made their way back towards the elevator.

“The Emperor is heading here right now. He will be here within the hour.” They stepped into the waiting elevator. “I fought against the firing of the weapon. Said it was wrong. Tarkin said he would let the Emperor know what I said. I am uncertain whether he informed Sidious before he perished. But, I know that I will be the person that is blamed for its destruction.”

Rey nodded. Vader could feel her heart racing.

They stepped out of the elevator and into the hanger towards his TIE Advanced, waiting for Rey to take flight.

Montferrat greeted Vader, nodding at Rey. Taking note of her lightsaber strapped to her belt. “The Emperor is minutes away. Your ship is prepped.”

“Thank you.” Vader said to him, guiding Rey over towards his TIE.

“I have ordered the Devastator’s cameras to be wiped as well. I said to go back approximately six months. Just to be certain.” He paused, taking a breath. “Is that far back enough?”

Vader nodded, reaching his ship. “It is.”

“Thank you,” Rey said quietly to Montferrat, giving him a small smile.

Vader made his way into his TIE, pointing at an empty space for Rey to place her bag. He helped her get settled into his seat. He bent down reaching for the tracker situated in the floor. He popped open a latch, reached in and yanked out the tracker. He crushed it in his fist.

He began strapping Rey into the harness. “The seat is far too big for you. Please make sure you keep this on at all times. Entering and exiting hyperspace is a bit rocky in this thing due to its small size.”
He reached into the pocket on his belt and pulled out the datacard. “The second Death Star plans. All on here.” He placed it in Rey’s palm. “I don’t know how accurate it will be after the destruction of the first one...but it is something.”

Her eyes were shining. “Come with me.” She pleaded.

Vader shook his head. “No. My place is here. I must stay here.”

Rey sniffed. Nodding. She cracked him a smile. “I thought you said you weren’t a spy. That you’d never, ever be a spy.”

He grinned. “Be safe Rey. Keep your shields strong. Kenobi will help you. Ahsoka will help you.” He stood up from the floor. “Make sure Luke is alright. He killed a lot of people today...it’s going to hit him eventually. Hard. Tell him...remind him of who he is. That he is Luke Skywalker. That he is no one’s weapon. He doesn’t have to fight this war if he doesn’t wish to. He shouldn’t be made into a weapon.”

Rey nodded once more. Her tears were running down her cheeks.

“And tell Leia...tell her that I am so proud of her...that she is so much like her mother.” His heart stuttered. “That she is strong like her mother.”

“I will,” Rey assured him quietly.

Vader nodded once more. “You must go. Be safe.” A pause. “Please.”

He pulled himself out of the TIE and closed the door tightly. Stepping back from the ship he motioned to flight control to allow the TIE to leave.

Rey started up the engine. Going through the pre-flight checks.

Vader watched closely as she carefully pulled out of the hanger. A bit shaky. A bit uncertain. But
good enough to be able to handle that particular TIE. It was a difficult ship to fly for anyone, let alone someone who had only flown flight simulators and ancient Corellian freighters.

Vader watched as the TIE flashed off into hyperspace.

He looked down at the floor. He could sense Montferrat making his way back towards him.

“Lord Vader. The Emperor should be arriving within the next ten minutes. His ship is about to leave hyperspace right now.”

Vader nodded. “Get the troopers in formation. He enjoys the attention.”
Chapter 10

The TIE Advanced blared its warning that it was about to leave hyperspace, jerking Rey back to the present. She clutched onto the steering mechanism tightly, having already learned her lesson from her first hyperspace jump.

Vader was right, the fighter was tricky to fly into and out of hyperspace.

Yavin, the gas giant came into view in front of Rey. She was a ways out from its moon, Yavin 4. Entirely on purpose. She needed to prepare to contact the Rebels via radio before she landed at their base.

She needed to tell them who she was. Ask for Kenobi. *Ask for a negotiator*, the Force was suggesting to her quietly. No actual names, just in case someone was listening in. She hoped she wouldn’t be shot at. This was a beautiful fighter. She didn’t want it to get damaged.

She sailed towards Yavin 4, the green contrasting greatly with the red gas giant it was orbiting.

She flicked on her radio, hailing the base below. “Attention, attention. I’m a scavenger searching for a negotiator. I repeat...I am a scavenger searching for her negotiator. I seek permission to land. I am a friendly seeking permission to land.”

Silence.

Rey’s heartbeat the only sound. She held her breath.

“Attention scavenger...permission granted. You have permission to land.” A kind male voice said over her radio.

Rey exhaled. “Affirmative.” She began her landing preparations, descending towards the jungle planet. Towards the base of operations.

She set down the TIE right next to Han Solo’s *Millennium Falcon* and began the shutdown procedures for the fighter. She could feel numerous people begin to surround the ship but
purposely avoided making eye contact with anyone. There were a lot of people here. A lot of
ghosts in her time.

She unbuckled her harness, finally taking a peek at the people gathered in front of the TIE. She
instantly spotted an older man with a beard standing with his arms crossed in front of everyone
else. **Obi-Wan Kenobi.**

He gave her a small smile and a subtle nod of his head.

Rey stood up from her seat, grabbing her bag tucked in behind her seat. She patted her pocket,
making sure she still had the datacard with her. Patted her hip — her lightsaber too. She popped
open the door and climbed out of the TIE. Dropping to the ground below.

She was nervous. Picking up the nervousness from the rebels around her.

She closed her eyes in order to reinforce her shields.

“Relax everyone. She is my student. She is no threat.” Obi-Wan had picked up on her discomfort.

“She came here in a TIE...how is she not a threat?”

Rey blinked open her eyes, grinning. “I stole it. Always had a thing for TIE Fighters.” She raised a
brow at the man, daring him to question her. “It’s a beautiful piece of engineering really...such a
shame for only the Empire to have them.”

The man challenging her raised a brow back at her in response. “What do you know about TIE
Fighters...you’re a child.” He crossed his arms across his chest. She had met travelers like him at
Niima Outpost — arrogant, proud. Always right.

Rey rolled her eyes, sighing. “I know that this TIE is one of a kind. The TIE Advanced x1,
prototype. It’s fitted with rear guns — something that has yet to be found in any TIE available
today. It also has a larger arsenal of weapons than the other TIE Fighters out there.” Rey paused,
ginning at Obi-Wan in front of her. “Apparently the former pilot of that ship had some anger
issues he needed to work through.”
“The former pilot…” a pause. “That’s Vader’s ship…are you insane?” The man was beginning to
get on her nerves. “You stole Darth kriffing Vader’s ship…he will hunt you down and kill you.
You’ve led him straight to us!”

Rey focused back on the familiar looking man. “Look…I’m not stupid alright. I do know my ass
from my elbow, regardless of what you may believe. The tracker is gone. Vader can easily get a
new TIE. He has no idea where I am.” She paused. “He has other, more pressing matters
concerning him right now.” Like the Emperor finding out about his treason. Finding out about his
Padawan.

“But —”

“Dameron, that is enough!” A woman stepped forward towards Rey. “It’s a pleasure to finally
meet you, dear.” A warm smile. “How about we get you set up with somewhere to stay while you
are here?”

Rey shook her head at the woman. This had to be Mothma. “I must speak with you and Obi-Wan
first.” She paused, the Force suggesting another person as well. “Draven too, if they are available.”

Mothma’s eyebrows raised high on her forehead. “I will let him know. The command center in
five.” She nodded at Kenobi.

Kenobi took Rey’s bag from her. “I will show you where the command center is Rey.” A hand
placed gently on her back, guiding her away from the crowd.

“Leia?” She asked him quietly once they began to make their way through the hallway.

“She’s fine.” Obi-Wan assured her. “She’s grieving the loss of Alderaan with her mother and father
in private. Luke, and Han Solo are with them offering support.”

This stopped Rey in her tracks. She looked at Kenobi with wide eyes. “Her parents are still alive?
They weren’t on Alderaan when…”

He shook his head, understanding humming around Rey. “They came here a few weeks ago…it’s
how we got access to the Tantive IV. We hoped that if we were to get caught by Imperial forces,
that maybe having a ship from Alderaan would prevent them from carrying out a thorough search
of the vessel.”

“A diplomatic mission…” Rey muttered quietly as they began walking again.

Obi-Wan hummed. “Yes...exactly.”

They entered into the command center. Only a few individuals were present in the room.

“There will be a private meeting in here in a few minutes,” Kenobi said kindly to the occupants.

“Of course, General.” The three individuals left the room quickly.

Rey took a seat in one of the chairs surrounding the large table pushed off to the side of the room. Her hands were shaking. A lot had happened over the last twenty four hours. It hadn’t really sunk in yet.

A hand reached out to grasp one of hers. Kenobi was watching her closely. “When was the last time you ate something?”

Rey hesitated. She couldn’t remember. “Yesterday...I think.”

Obi-Wan reached out and picked up a ration bar. “You must eat.”

“A lot was happening...I didn’t have time.” She peeled open the wrapping and took a big bite. Chewing slowly. Savouring the food.

Mothma and a disheveled looking man entered into the command center. Draven. He had just lost another fulcrum on Scarif. Rey needed to remember that.

“Hi.” She reached a hand out to the man. “I’m Rey.”
He shook her hand and gave her a curt nod. “Draven.” He took a seat a few spots away from Rey.

“You’re Chancellor Mothma, correct?” Rey asked the woman, she needed to be certain before she was to continue.

She gave Rey a smile and a nod as she sat next to her. “I am. You can just call me Mon, if you wish. There is no need for the titles.”

Rey nodded, taking a deep breath. She reached into her pocket, pulling out the datacard. She handed it to Mon. “On here are the plans for the second Death Star. My...teacher got them before the first Death Star exploded.” She paused, taking in the shock of everyone present in the room. “He doesn’t know how accurate they will be after all the flaws of the first one. But it’s somewhere to start.”

“He...he got you the plans?” Obi-Wan asked her quietly.

Rey turned to look at him closely. “He did.” She nodded.

Kenobi rubbed his face tiredly. A small smile hidden in his beard.

Rey turned her attention back to Mothma and Draven. “I will try to explain as much as I can...but not today. Today I need help finding someone. Someone missing...they’ve been missing for years. They need to come home.”

Draven frowned. “Who?”

Rey gave him a small smile. “Your fulcrum.”

He snorted, shaking his head. “I just lost my fulcrum on Scarif...you’re a little late to the party, Rey.”

Rey nodded. “And I am sorry for your loss...but that wasn’t who I was talking about. I meant your *first* fulcrum.”
Draven just looked at her. “She’s been gone for years. She is dead. Killed on some mission she wouldn’t tell me anything about. I don’t even know where she went.” He pointed a gnarled finger at Rey. “Your information is weak. I can’t help you at all.”

Rey took a breath, about to reply, when Obi-Wan interrupted her.

“Who was...is...the first fulcrum?” He looked between Mothma and Draven. “Do you know her identity?” He asked the chancellor.

She shook her head. “I never knew it. What about you Draven?”

He looked down at the floor. “I had my suspicions...but I respected her enough not to ask.”

“I know.” Rey said quietly. She looked to Obi-Wan, fighting a grin. “The first fulcrum is Ahsoka Tano.”

A sob erupted out of Kenobi. “You’re saying she’s still alive? She survived the purge?”

Rey nodded. She grasped his hands. “She did. She had a good teacher. A good Master.” She paused, trying to gather her thoughts. “She went to Malachor. To the Sith temple. She met Vader. Destroyed his helmet. His mask. Almost killed him. The floor collapsed underneath the two of them. She got pulled away in time.” She paused, waiting for Kenobi to catch what she wasn’t saying. Obi-Wan’s eyes widened infinitesimally. He caught her emphasis. “Vader fell through the temple with the collapsing floor.” She squeezed Obi-Wan’s hand. “She is without communications or a ship to get off of the planet. She’s been waiting for years for someone to find her.”

Silence.

“How do you know this?” Draven asked her. “Who’s your contact?”

Rey sighed. “My information came from the same person who gave me that.” She gestured to the datacard still clutched in Mothma’s hand. “I will explain what I can later. I swear...but me and Kenobi need to get Ahsoka off of Malachor. We must go as soon as possible. I gave my word.”
The chancellor nodded in agreement. “I give my permission for the two of you to take a ship.” She looked to Rey. “I need to ask, Rey...are we safe here for now?”

Draven frowned at the question, looking between Rey and Mothma.

Rey hesitated. “I think so. It happened differently… the Empire doesn’t know your location this time. To the best of my knowledge at least.”

The chancellor nodded. “I can work with that.” She gave Rey a small smile. “If there is an evacuation here, we will be at the location that was agreed upon, Obi-Wan.” She looked pointedly at the Jedi.

A grin on Obi-Wan’s face. “The location that you agreed to...or the one that I agreed to?”

Mon scoffed. “The one I agreed to, of course.” She threw him a grin. “It is the better location of the two.”

“We must leave now.” A statement, not a question.

She nodded at Obi-Wan. “The sooner the better. She should be there…” she frowned. “How long of a trip is it from here?”

“Likely a day to get there,” he replied. “Plus a day or so to search. Then a day to get back. We can’t go directly there from here.”

Rey nodded. “Need to cover our tracks just in case.”

“I assume you did that to get here?” Draven injected himself into the conversation once more.

Rey nodded. “I did. I took four hyperspace jumps...that should be enough...right?” She looked between Draven and Mothma.
Draven nodded. “More than enough. Usually you only need to take two or three to be able to disappear from potential tracking.”

Rey sighed in relief. She wasn’t sure how many she needed to take to be certain no one was following her.

“When you, Obi-Wan, and hopefully Ahsoka get back, we will sit down and have a chat.” Mothma said kindly to Rey.

“Yes...I’d like that,” Rey replied. She had a few things she’d like to say to the chancellor. She exhaled slowly, looking towards Obi-Wan.

He nodded at Rey, watching her closely. “I need to fill Luke in and get my bag. Then we can leave.” He stood up from his seat. “Are you piloting or am I?”

Rey gave a huff of laughter. “You please. I’ve flown two ships in my entire life...I mostly just stuck with flight simulators. That was all I had access to...where I grew up.” She frowned.

“Alright...give me a few minutes. I will meet you here.” Obi-Wan left the room, leaving Rey alone with Mothma and Draven.

She took another bite of her ration bar. She felt like she was beginning to crash. Her adrenaline from earlier in the day was waning quickly.

“Did you need some water?” The chancellor asked her quietly.

Rey’s eyes widened. She’d never turn down water. “Please.”

Mothma poured her a glass and set the pitcher close by. “Have as much as you need. There is plenty of water here to go around.”

Rey took a long drink from her glass. Her eyes closing in relief. It was delicious.
“You’re from a desert world,” Draven said curiously to her.

Rey’s eyes popped open. The Intelligence General was watching her closely. She nodded, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. “I am.”

“That’s where you know Kenobi from. Tatooine…correct?” He was searching for information.

Rey paused. Hesitant. *He can be trusted*, the Force whispered to her. “No. Jakku is where I am from.” She needed to give him something. She needed to earn his trust. “It’s in the Western Reaches of the Inner Rim.” She took another bite of her food.

Draven frowned. “I’ve never heard of it before.”

Rey gave him a tired grin. “You’re not the first person to tell me that.” A forgotten planet with forgotten people. Invisible. Unimportant. Irrelevant. She shook her head, trying to dispel her thoughts. “It’s not a heavily populated planet. That’s probably why…” Her tight smile didn’t reach her eyes. She was tired of being invisible. Angry.

“Ready to go?” Obi-Wan poked his head through the doorway. A bag slung over his shoulder.

Rey nodded, standing up from her seat. She folded the wrapper around her ration bar and tucked the leftovers into her bag on the floor. She drained her glass of water, before nodding her goodbyes to Mothma and Draven. Grabbing her bag, she followed Kenobi back towards the hanger of the base.

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Obi-Wan sat back in his seat, exhaling slowly. Their modified transport vessel began its first hyperspace jump; it would take a couple of hours for he and Rey to reach the next jumping point. Malachor was a ways away.

He turned his attention to Rey sitting in the co-pilot chair next to him. Vader had told him on Tatooine that she was bright. Strictly lightside. Obi-Wan could barely feel it, she had shielded herself extremely well.
What alarmed him was the anger he felt back in the command center. A sharp piercing dagger before it was quickly hidden away. Behind her shields.

Rey was holding onto her anger. Grasping onto it tightly, careful to not let any of it go free. She reminded him of Anakin when he was his Padawan. And even he had let go sporadically.

Obi-Wan sighed. Vader hadn’t noticed it when he visited Tatooine. But did he know about it now? Could he recognize it in Rey?

“You were angry at something Draven and Mothma said,” Obi-Wan prompted her, turning in his seat to face her.

Rey looked down at her hands in her lap. Sighing. She looked exhausted. She gave him a curt nod. “I was.”

Obi-Wan waited for her to continue.

Nothing. She was keeping everything close to her chest.

“Care to enlighten me on what it was about?” He winced internally. He could do better than that. Mothma was right...he was out of practice.

Rey shook her head. “I really don’t wish to.” Closed off.

No trust. She didn’t need to say it for Obi-Wan to hear it.

He thought back to what Vader — Anakin — had told him about Rey on Tatooine. An untrained Force sensitive. About Luke and Leia’s age. Scavenger. Orphan. No. That wasn’t what he said. On her own since she was six years old. A scavenger of crashed Imperial Star Destroyers. Since she was six. A child.

He sighed. A memory of a time long ago. When he was still a Padawan, seeing nine year old Anakin for the first time. A slave boy fighting for survival in the Tatooine desert.
Scavenger. Slave. Different words, same meaning. At least in this context.

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. The Force was trying to fix what had happened almost twenty years prior. The schism of darkness that had been permeating everything for the last twenty...no thirty years. Longer. It was trying desperately to heal the wound.

That’s why Rey was sent back in time. He’d bet his lightsaber on it.

He cleared his throat, this was tricky territory. “Have you at least told someone else about your anger?”

Rey nodded, rubbing her eyes. “I spoke with Vader. He told me to voice my concerns with Mothma when I get a chance. I will do so when we get back to Yavin.” She paused, hesitant. “He said that me letting go of my anger probably wouldn’t work very well for me. He said it never worked very well for him.”

Oh.

She yawned before turning to face Obi-Wan directly. She gave him a small smile. “Is it alright if I take a nap? I haven’t slept in days, it seems.” She stood up from her seat and moved closer to her bag. “I brought my blanket and everything.”

Unzipping her bag, she pulled out a fluffy pillow and a black, thick blanket. “Oh.” Surprise hummed around Obi-Wan.

He raised his brows in response as he watched Rey reach for something else in her bag. His eyes grew when she pulled out a datapad.

“Vader gave me this to give to you,” Rey explained quietly to him. “My training stuff is on there. He wanted you to have it so that you’d know where I was with everything.” She gestured with her free hand. Handing the datapad to him.

His mouth popped open in surprise. This was very unexpected. “Thank you, Rey.” He gave her a friendly smile. “I will definitely read it while you catch some rest.”
She grinned at him, nodding before sitting down on her seat. Obi-Wan watched as Rey unfolded her blanket and pushed her seat back into a reclining position. Her feet resting on the control dashboard. She clutched the tacky pillow to her chest. Sighing. Her eyes blinked closed.

She was out like a light.

Obi-Wan turned his attention to the datapad in his hands. He flicked it on and began scrolling through all of the information. Wondering if he could get access to other Imperial information from this particular datapad.

He focused on word files. These would be here, and only here. Vader’s notes on things. He always took notes. Even as a child. He did it to practice his spelling, having never gone to school. He used to spell most words phonetically. At least when he was nine. It was a habit he quickly corrected when he arrived at the temple.

There were two word documents on the datapad. One labeled Bonds, the other Rey’s Training. He’d start there first.

Obi-Wan clicked the file open, getting comfortable as he began reading.

Rey from Jakku. Inner Rim — Western Reaches. Desert planet. Scavenger. Destroyers. Home was an AT-AT Walker.

He blinked in surprise — that was a war machine, not a home.

Shields non-existent before training. Lived alone since ten. Parents sold her to Unkar Plutt at six. Abandoned her on Jakku. Saw ship fly away from her when she was a little girl in a memory.

Obi-Wan swallowed, his throat tight with emotion. He shook his head at the words in front of him.

Picks up Force abilities quickly. Mind suggestion on Starkiller Base. A.S lightsaber called to her on Takodana. Force reached for it on Starkiller Base. Able to break through shields, into minds, without any training — Kylo Ren on Starkiller Base.
Myself one day after arrival. My fault, forgot she was Padawan, not enemy.

Obi-Wan’s eyes grew large. That should have been close to impossible on someone like Anakin. His shields were practically impenetrable. He shook his head and continued reading.


Obi-Wan rubbed his eyes. She lived a hard life. That’s what Anakin was trying to tell him. That was why she couldn’t trust him yet. It wasn’t anything personal. She had just been hurt before.


What indeed. Obi-Wan blinked a few times. Trying to remember if he had heard anything about Jakku before Rey. He shook his head at himself. He had nothing.

Sighing, he reached a hand out for his water canteen. Grinning slightly when it flew into his hand. He took a sip.


Obi-Wan nodded to himself. She and him could meditate together on Yavin 4. He could help her, make sure she didn’t get too overwhelmed with everything alive on the planet. He had to do the same with Anakin when he was a boy on Coruscant.
He frowned as he read the next line of Vader’s report.

*Updated from second connected device.*

Obi-Wan paused, cracking a grin. They might still be able to communicate with each other. Vader had linked his two datapads together. Cloned them. He let out a breath, continuing his reading.


Obi-Wan’s heart stuttered to a halt. It never ended.

**Rey not sleeping well. Had to Force suggest her sleep on Mustafar. She doesn’t remember waking up from a nightmare. I may have been a bit overzealous with my suggestion. Her anger is more apparent. More difficult for her to hide it away. Because of Sith Temple? Possible mistake on my part. Rejection. Hurt. Anger. Hate. Republic Alliance left Jakku to fend for itself after battle. Like original Republic, nothing there to trade. Blames R.A for her life on Jakku. Daughter rejected her and sent her to Luke to train in the Force. Luke’s Jedi Order took in everyone. Refused to train Rey. Expected to help Rebels, Republic — no one helped her. No one offered to help her but me, a Sith. Good job, Republic.**

Obi-Wan sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose. The same mistakes, over and over. He needed to help her. Not ask her for anything, other than her patience as he figured out how to train her properly.

He frowned at the next part. The last paragraph.

always a plan B. Likely has another spy already in place. Or will soon.

Obi-Wan nodded to himself. He figured that as well. He had caught the spy over a month ago. Read their mind and killed them when he was finished. From what he could tell, Sidious had no idea about Leia being related to Luke. It was something he was hoping would stay secret between only a few people for as long as possible.

He backed out of the file, and opened the other one on bonds. His eyes grew large as he read what Vader had written.

Strange bond with Rey. Can feel each other’s emotions like they were our own. Don’t understand. Definitely not a Master-Padawan bond. Too intense. Too specific.

Learned of Padmé’s cause of death from Rey. Learned what daughter’s adoptive parents told daughter. Sidious told me I strangled her to death. That I lost control. (I did)

Hit me hard. Broke down. Lost control again. Rey was in her bedroom. I was down hallway in training room. Like Rey transported to training room in front of me. She thought I was in her bedroom. She could feel my emotions. Thought they were her own.

I can’t find anything on my end that describes a bond like this. Do you know of something?

I cannot ask Sidious. I refuse to ask Yoda.

Obi-Wan stared at the words. His mind blank. He had no idea what their bond could be. He thought back to the time when he felt Vader’s breakdown. His emotions. Anger. Hate. Regret. Overwhelming grief.

He was grieving for Padmé. Obi-Wan closed his eyes in understanding. Vader believed Padmé had died on Mustafar. That he had killed her on Mustafar. That was what Palpatine had told him had happened.

Manipulative bastard.
He looked back to the note. Frowning. Why was he refusing to ask Yoda? Other than the obvious reasons, him being a Sith and Yoda the Grand Master of the Jedi. But...that couldn’t be it. Vader asked him...someone he should’ve had a personal grudge against.

Obi-Wan understood instantly. He was the lesser of two...in this case, three evils. “What did Yoda do to you?” He muttered to himself.

“He told Anakin that his nightmare, his vision of Padmé dying was the way of the Force.” A soft voice said to him.

He turned to look at Rey, huddled underneath her blanket. Still clutching her fluffy pillow. Watching him closely.

“His vision?”

Rey nodded. “He said that he dreamt that Padmé was going to die, so he went to Yoda for help. He said that Yoda told him that he needed to let go. That it was the way of the Force.” She hugged her pillow. “Palpatine conveniently offered to help him, because he’s a slimy bastard. He was the second person Anakin asked. The only one who offered a possible solution. The only one who didn’t disregard his feelings. His fear.” Rey dropped her feet back down on the floor. “He fell...no. He chose the darkside only to help save Padmé. It was the price he was willing to pay to make sure she didn’t die. He did everything Palpatine asked of him, for Padmé. He was desperate.”

Anakin would’ve tore apart the entire galaxy if he believed it would save Padmé. And he kind of did. He wiped out the Jedi and younglings at the Temple, and the separatists on Mustafar because he thought it was the only way to save her. He broke for her. Obi-Wan was speechless. He thought to what Rey said about Yoda. Why would Yoda say that to Anakin? He knew of his visions about his mother dying. He knew they eventually came true. They had discussed it. He and Yoda. They agreed that they would listen to Anakin if he should get another vision. That they wouldn’t disregard it as a bad dream.

“He told me that his relationship with Padmé, their marriage, would’ve gotten him kicked out of the Jedi Order.” Rey continued on. “He had just found out she was pregnant. He thought he’d be banished from the Jedi. That his attachment to her was seen as something bad. That it would lead to the darkside.” Rey hummed quietly. “I suppose it technically did.”

Marriage. “They were married?” He was an idiot. He knew they were in a relationship of some
sort. Figured it out, eventually. But he had no idea it was that serious. He thought it was more one
sided on Anakin’s part. He didn’t realize it was mutual. Not to that extent, at least. He thought
Padmé had...for lack of a better term...mistakenly gotten pregnant. That it was unplanned. An
accident.

Rey just looked at him. Disbelief evident on her face. She nodded slowly. “They got married on
Naboo after he lost his arm. He had time off, he said. During that time off, he traveled to Naboo
and they got married.”

Obi-Wan was shocked. “He was still my Padawan then.”

Rey raised an eyebrow at him. Challenging. “Some Master you were. Not even noticing your
Padawan was married.”

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. He was a fool.

So many mistakes were made. Stupid mistakes.

He rubbed his face with a free hand. He gestured to the datapad in his other hand. “He told me
about your bond. Wanted to know if I knew anything.”

“And? Do you?” She was eager to learn. Her annoyance at him completely forgotten.

He shook his head. “I have no idea. I’ve never heard of anything like that happening before.” He
paused, thinking about Vader’s description of what happened. “He said that you thought his
emotions were your own…”

Rey nodded. “I felt his tears run down my cheeks. I thought they were my own tears...but when I
went to wipe my cheeks with my hand it came back dry.”

“And you both appeared to each other?”

She nodded. “Yes. Only for a short time. The emotions lasted longer...a few minutes at least.
Maybe thirty.” She frowned. “He rebuilt his shields and disappeared.”
Obi-Wan nodded slowly. An extremely intense Force bond of some sort. He had nothing more than that.

“I’m actually surprised I haven’t experienced it again after the Death Star.” Rey’s statement brought him back to the present. He waited for her to explain. “The Emperor was coming to his Star Destroyer to see him. Vader had told Tarkin that the Death Star was wrong. Argued that it was wrong...just before it fired on Alderaan.” She looked at her hands closely. Self-conscious. Unsure. “I figured that Sidious would punish him with Force lightning. I haven’t felt a single thing. Not even a twitch.”

Obi-Wan stroked his beard. “Vader may have strengthened his shields. He probably strengthened them just before the Emperor arrived. To protect you. To keep you safe.” He could sense Rey’s worry. “Palpatine won’t kill Vader. I promise he won’t. He has lost far too many high positioned individuals in his Empire over the last few days. He would lose support if Vader, his right hand man, were to die as well.” He paused. “There would be no one to enforce the Galactic Empire. It would be a poor political move, so I’ve been told.”

Rey nodded slowly. Her eyes were shining. “It’s how Anakin died in my time. Palpatine electrocuted him to death with his Force lightning. He stepped in to protect Luke from it. To stop Luke from getting blasted with it. His life support system couldn’t handle it.” She paused. “Anakin tossed Palpatine into the reactor core of the second Death Star.”

Obi-Wan hummed. He needed to make sure Rey remained calm. He could feel her pain at the thought of Anakin getting killed. Her fear. She cared about him. Had become attached to him in just a few short months.

He sighed, giving her a small smile. “We will just have to make sure that Anakin doesn’t die this time.”
“So...can you tell me more about what happened with Ahsoka before we arrive on Malachor?”

Rey nodded in response. Finishing her bite of food before answering Obi-Wan. She hummed to herself, trying to figure out where to begin. “I first heard about her from General Organa before I arrived here.” She waited for the Jedi sitting across from her to react. He gave her a nod. She continued. “My General told me some stuff about what happened before I was born. About the rebellion. About the Empire. About the fall of it.” She cleared her throat before taking a sip from her water canteen. “She told me that the Force was insisting that she tell me certain things. I was about to leave on an assignment. She needed to tell me stuff before I left.”

“What was the assignment?” Curiosity hummed around Rey.

“To bring Luke Skywalker back to the Resistance.” Rey looked down at her hands in her lap. “He had shut himself off from the Force and went into hiding. His nephew had wiped out his new Jedi Order a few years before. Luke apparently went looking for answers. He found the first Jedi temple.” Obi-Wan’s eyes grew large. Rey nodded, hesitating before she continued her explanation. “Also, I went to him to get some training. Leia was never trained in the Force — she didn’t want to be. I...I don’t think she liked that part of herself. The Anakin part. The Darth Vader part of her.” Rey grimaced. “Looking back...I think she feared it.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly, gesturing for her to continue.

“One of the many things Leia told me about was someone named Ahsoka Tano. She said that Ahsoka was the first fulcrum in the rebellion. She said that Ahsoka showed up just after the second Death Star was destroyed. Everyone in the rebellion thought she had been killed.” Rey nodded to herself. “Ahsoka told Leia that she had to wait for years for a ship to land on the planet she was marooned on. Years.”

“What did you mean about time?” Obi-Wan asked her quietly. “I assume you emphasized the word for a reason…”

Rey hesitated. “I don’t know for sure. But the Force is saying that she traveled ahead in time a few years.” She frowned, trying to figure out a way to explain it. “Vader said that he fought her in the Sith temple on Malachor approximately three years ago. She damaged his mask...tore it open with her lightsaber. He has the damaged helmet in his fortress. In his medical facility on Mustafar.” She blew out a long breath. “He told me that when they were fighting, a portal opened up behind her and a hand reached out. She was pulled through the portal as the floor underneath him collapsed.
He dropped through the temple with the floor. She disappeared into the portal. Vader had to climb out without his respirator working properly.”


“Did Leia tell you if Ahsoka was alright? Years in a Sith temple, or nearby a Sith temple, could be detrimental to someone Force sensitive.”

Rey swallowed. Shaking her head. “Leia didn’t even know Ahsoka was Force sensitive. She didn’t know Ahsoka personally. Not to my knowledge at least. When she came back to the rebellion, Ahsoka asked them for a ship capable of hyperspace travel. She said she needed to find someone in the Unknown Regions.” Rey shook her head. “I don’t think she was around for much after she came back. She certainly wasn’t there when I was.”

Obi-Wan frowned. Nodding at the information. “Do you know if she said who helped her off of Malachor in your timeline?”

Rey shook her head. “I have no idea.”

“Not me?”

Rey looked down at her lap. She shook her head. “Definitely not you.”

“Because I was dead by that time.” Understanding hummed strongly around Rey.

She gave the Jedi Knight a shaky nod of her head. “Vader killed you on the Death Star. Leia was captured just after Scarif. Above Tatooine. She had sent two droids down to the surface begging you for help. Her claim that she was on a diplomatic mission didn’t work. The rebels with her were slaughtered by Vader above Scarif. She was tortured by Vader for hours, trying to get the location of the Rebel Base. Of Yavin 4...apparently Vader couldn’t get through her shields. Tarkin destroyed Alderaan to try to get her to talk. She still wouldn’t give them the location. You and Luke...and Han Solo and Chewy ended up on the Death Star too. You distracted Vader to allow Han, Chewy, Luke and Leia time to leave.” She swallowed before continuing quietly. “You sacrificed yourself to protect Luke and Leia.”
Rey watched as Obi-Wan took the information in.

He gave her a slow nod. “You’ve changed a lot already then.” He grinned. “The rebels Leia was with above Scarif are still alive. Most of them at least. They have lost limbs though. Hands mostly. One fellow lost a leg. They are being fitted with cybernetics at the base right now.”

Rey was shocked. Vader actually listened to her. He had only injured them for the most part. She hid her grin behind a hand. “I asked Vader to try not to kill anyone just before he left.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “He listened. He also helped the Rebels leave. The door was jammed and he pushed it open for them to get through. Told them to hug his Destroyer as they prepared for hyperspace.” He chuckled quietly. “The Rebel soldiers were confused about what happened. Said it must have been an imposter. That for some reason he was insisting that they protect the Princess. That they must protect Leia.”

Rey nodded. “He knows his daughter’s identity now. I told him just before we left Mustafar.”


Rey swallowed. Hesitant. “We need to tell Luke and Leia what really happened to their father.”

Obi-Wan’s eyes grew. He opened his mouth to reply.

Rey held up a hand. “Let me explain. Please.” Obi-Wan gave her a nod. “Luke didn’t know about Vader being his father until he tried to kill him.”

Obi-Wan paled.

Rey nodded, continuing. “He thought that Vader killed Anakin Skywalker. He thought that because that was what he was told by both you — as a Force ghost, and Yoda — who had taken over with his training. Luke wanted to avenge his father’s death. He went in looking solely for revenge.” Rey gestured. “Luckily for him Vader knew who Luke was by that point. Vader sliced off his hand, and then told him he was his father.”
Obi-Wan just looked at Rey. Shock evident on his face. “How did Vader from your timeline find out?”

Rey sighed. “The rebellion released the identity of the Jedi who took out the Death Star. They did it to gain more support from potential allies. Having a Jedi with the rebellion was vital for their success.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. “I don’t wish for Luke to do that this time.” He grimaced. “If they need a Jedi to gain more support I will do it instead. Maybe Ahsoka as well. To send a message to Vader...to the Emperor.”

Rey nodded in agreement. She hesitated before continuing with her explanation. With her argument to tell Leia and Luke Vader’s true identity. “In my time...Luke felt betrayed by both you and Yoda for not telling him the truth about his father.” She exhaled slowly. “He didn’t tell Leia they were related until he was about to leave for the second Death Star. He was going there to save Vader. He had accepted that Darth Vader was once Anakin Skywalker. He wanted his father back. He could sense the conflict in him. He could sense the light in him struggling to break through once more.” Rey nodded to herself. “He didn’t tell his sister about who Vader truly was until then. Leia had no opportunity to come to terms with the fact that her biological father was Darth Vader. Vader — and Palpatine — died shortly afterwards. There was no opportunity for redemption. No opportunity for some sort of understanding. Nothing.”

Obi-Wan sat in front of Rey, watching her closely. He sighed. “Alright. When we get back to the base we will tell Leia and Luke.”

He stood up from his seat. “It’s time for you to take control of the ship. We will be leaving hyperspace shortly. I need to open myself up to the Force to find Ahsoka as quickly as possible. I really don’t want us to have to stay here for very long.”

Rey slid out of her seat and sat in the pilot’s chair. Obi-Wan took her seat.

“Malachor has a Sith temple. It was a Sith stronghold a thousand years ago. It is incredibly dark. You cannot help me search. It is far too risky for someone barely trained.”

Rey nodded as she got comfortable. “I know. Keep my shields tight and strong at all times. Focus on my task. Listen to where you tell me to fly.”
Obi-Wan nodded. Shutting his eyes.

The ship blared its warning it was leaving hyperspace. Rey clutched the controls.

A desolate planet came into view. Dark. Rey shivered. So incredibly dark. She forced her walls to stay strong.

“Head towards the temple.” Obi-Wan said quietly to her. “To the east.”

Rey maneuvered the ship through the atmosphere in the direction Obi-Wan indicated. She dropped the vessel closer towards the surface. After a few minutes she spotted the remnants of a temple. “I see it.”

“Find a place to land close to the temple. Ahsoka is in there. I can feel her signature.”

Rey could feel a calming presence wrap around her. Soothing. Comforting. Obi-Wan was telling Ahsoka he was here. That she was safe.

She started the landing procedures of the vessel, bringing it a few feet in front of the entrance to the temple. She began the standby procedures once she touched ground.

Movement in front of her drew her attention towards the front of the temple. A togruta female cautiously made their way closer to the vessel. “There she is.”

Rey turned to look at Obi-Wan. He had tears streaming down his face. “I’ll go to her. Just in case. You stay here.” He got up from his seat and made his way towards the rear of the ship.

Rey waited. The loading ramp hit the ground. Obi-Wan’s footsteps heavy on the ramp as he made his way down to the planet’s surface.

Rey watched as Obi-Wan stepped in front of the vessel, towards Ahsoka. He was speaking to her. Asking questions. Ahsoka nodded at something he said. Replying. Explaining.
Rey watched as she began to cry. She watched as Obi-Wan took her in for a hug.

They made their way back towards the ship together.

Footsteps coming up the ramp. The loading ramp clamped shut.

“We can go, Rey!” Obi-Wan called out from the rear of the ship.

Rey lifted off of the surface, pulling higher up into the atmosphere. She set their course for the agreed upon coordinates.

The vessel took a moment to load the coordinates, before it flashed into hyperspace.

She pushed the seat away from the controls and made her way out of the cockpit.

Sitting on a small bench seat off to the side were Obi-Wan and Ahsoka. He had an arm wrapped around the togruta, trying to comfort her.

Rey hesitantly made her way closer. “Did you need some food? Or water?” She looked at the togruta cautiously, not wanting to upset her even more.

Ahsoka sniffed, blinking away her tears. “I’d love both if you have it.” She gave Rey a small smile. Exhaling shakily.

Rey nodded and made her way over to the kitchenette of the ship. She grabbed a ration bar and an extra canteen of water before making her way back towards the pair. Handing both items to Ahsoka, Rey pulled up an extra seat and sat down facing the two Force users.

“How long were you on Malachor for?” Obi-Wan asked Ahsoka after she had a few bites of her food.

She swallowed her food. Hesitant. “A few weeks, I think.” She paused. “It’s complicated.”
Obi-Wan grinned. “Time travel?”

Ahsoka turned to look at him directly. Shock emitting from her. “How — how did you know?”

Obi-Wan looked to Rey, raising an eyebrow.

“Because of me,” Rey told her quietly. “I’m from the future.” Ahsoka turned to peer at Rey. Eyes huge in shock. “Over thirty years in the future. I went to sleep one night in my time, and woke up in a storage closet on Vader’s Star Destroyer a few months ago.”

Ahsoka blinked at her. Silent for a moment. “Kriffing hell.” She frowned. “How long have I been missing? I know I traveled into the future, but I don’t know how far...everything feels different than it did before.”

“Three years,” Obi-Wan answered her.

“Kriffing hell,” Ahsoka swore again. Trying to wrap her head around everything. She rubbed her face.

“Can you tell us what happened?” Obi-Wan asked her quietly. “Vader — Anakin — told Rey that you were pulled through a portal of some sort when the two of you were fighting.”

Ahsoka nodded. “Ezra grabbed me and pulled me through just as the floor was about to collapse. We were in a...world between worlds...a dimension of the Force that connects all of time and space together. I honestly thought that I exited it in the same time...only a few minutes later...but when I stepped through the portal everything felt different.” She took a drink from her canteen. “I realized then that I had traveled in time. Because it wasn’t a familiar feeling, I assumed I jumped ahead in time.”

“And then you waited for someone to find you,” Obi-Wan finished for her.

Ahsoka nodded. “I tried opening myself up to the Force for someone to notice, but...I couldn’t do it for very long. The darkness there is overwhelming.”
Rey nodded in understanding. Mustafar felt the same even with her shields holding strong.

“Why did Vader,” a pause. Her eyes showing pain. “Why did Vader tell you about me?” Ahsoka shook her head at Rey. “Why didn’t he kill you when he found you in his storage closet?”

Rey reached to her hip and unclipped her saber that was partially hidden underneath her cloth wraps. Showing it to Ahsoka. Her eyes widened as she recognized the saber. “I think because I had this. I exited the closet myself...a few minutes after I woke up. I was confused, trying to figure out what had happened. Realized quickly that I was on a Star Destroyer. I ran towards the lifts to get the hell out of there and Vader stepped out of them. He knocked me on my ass...his darkness was a bit overwhelming.” Ahsoka nodded in understanding. “I was confused. In my time Vader had been...dead for years...I grabbed my saber and ignited it. Ready to fight him, while my brain tried to catch up.” Rey snorted. “He took the saber from me in about a second, shut it off, hooked it on his belt, and just stood there asking me who the hell I was.”

Rey nodded to herself, remembering clearly that moment only months ago. “I mentioned my name. Told him that I was from Jakku after he asked me. I mentioned that Jakku was the location of the final battle before the Empire fell.” She exhaled slowly. “He informed me that the Empire hadn’t fallen. Told me I must have come from the future. It made sense...sort of. The Force was telling me that he was telling the truth, even if I didn’t want to believe it. I said something about his grandson after he ridiculed me for not having shields.” Rey looked between Obi-Wan and Ahsoka, before continuing. “He pulled me into his quarters and got me to explain what I meant by grandson.”

Obi-Wan grimaced and went to ask Rey a question.

She shook her head. “He never forced me to tell him anything. He just asked. He never hurt me...not intentionally at least.”

Obi-Wan relaxed. As did Ahsoka.

“I told him about his children. His family. The Force was insisting.” Rey continued. “I told him a few things about what happened. I had to. I needed to explain.” She looked at the floor, self-conscious. “I asked him why he hadn’t killed me yet. Said he had a reputation. And he told me that the Force was screaming at him to not kill me. That it was telling him to protect me.” Rey swallowed. “The Force was telling me that I could trust him. That I needed to trust him. That he could train me.” She looked to Ahsoka, her eyes wide with emotion. “No one from my time would train me. They refused, turned me away. I needed shields. Desperately. I was in a time with Palpatine. I needed to hide. Vader kept me safe. He helped me. Trained me. Spoke with me. Listened to me.”
Ahsoka nodded slowly, encouraging Rey to continue.

Rey sniffed. “Over the past couple of weeks around Empire Day, I was hidden away on Mustafar. In his fortress. He was on Coruscant with the Emperor. It was safer for me to be as far away from Palpatine as possible.” She cleared her throat. “His helmet was there. The one that you destroyed on Malachor. It caught my attention, so I asked him about it. He told me you were the one who damaged it. Said it happened three years ago. I knew from Leia...General Organa in my time, that you were the rebellion’s first fulcrum. She didn’t know you were Force sensitive. She told me that you had disappeared for years before returning to the rebellion.” Rey paused, thinking about what Vader said. “Vader insisted that I find you and get you off of Malachor. He told me to take Obi-Wan. He said it had to be the first thing I did. Before anything else.”

Ahsoka nodded slowly. “When did I return in your timeline? Around now?” Her curiosity was brimming against Rey.

Rey shook her head. “You returned just after the destruction of the second Death Star...about four years from now. You were stuck on Malachor for years before someone got you off of there. I don’t know who. You never told Leia.”

“Four years?” Ahsoka asked quietly. “I survived there for four years?” She looked at Obi-Wan. “Why?” Her lip quivered. “Yoda knew where I was. It was his mission. Why didn’t he tell you? Why didn’t you come for me?”

Obi-Wan clutched Ahsoka’s hands in his own. “I had no idea. I swear. If I knew anything I would’ve searched for you, even if everyone said you were killed on Malachor. I haven’t had any contact with Yoda for years. I didn’t even know you survived the purge.” He squeezed her hands. “In Rey’s time...I died on the first Death Star.”

Ahsoka nodded. Wiping her cheeks. She turned to Rey. “Thank you for finding me. I owe you. Anything you want.” She looked down to the floor. Sighing. “The first Death Star was used, wasn’t it? I felt something awful two days ago.”

Kenobi nodded. “Tarkin fired on Alderaan. Bail and Breha were off planet with the rebellion at the time. We were able to destroy the Death Star. Luke fired two proton torpedoes into an exhaust port and blew up the weapon.”


Ahsoka’s shock wafted against Rey. “Kriffing hell.”

Obi-Wan chuckled. “I am training him in the Force right now. I’ve taken on Rey as well. She arrived at the rebel base just after the destruction of the Death Star. She showed up in Vader’s TIE Advanced. He got her off of his Destroyer in time before Palpatine showed up.” He grinned at Ahsoka before continuing. “He gave Rey a datacard with the plans for the second Death Star.”

Ahsoka frowned. “You think he wants to come back to the light?” Her eyes searching Obi-Wan’s face. Desperate.

Rey answered her. “He returned to the lightside just before he died in my timeline. He killed Palpatine to protect Luke from him. Luke’s love for him brought him back. He just needed a reason to fight the darkness.”

Ahsoka looked at Rey sadly. “How did he die in your timeline? How did Anakin die?”

Rey looked to the floor. “Palpatine hit him with Force lightning. It wreaked havoc on his life support system, from what I was told.”

“He stepped in front of Luke to protect him from Palpatine,” Obi-Wan clarified. “I have a feeling that he knew he was going to die. He would’ve known. He would’ve felt it in the Force.”

Ahsoka wiped her cheeks. Glaring. “Well that’s garbage! He’s not going to die this time. I won’t let him!”

Rey grinned, she liked Ahsoka.

“We’ll figure it out. I promise.” Obi-Wan said quietly to the two of them. He looked to Rey. “You need to get some rest, Rey. How about you take the first sleep shift...Ahsoka and I can fly the ship for now.”
Rey nodded, she was tired. “Alright. Wake me when you need me to take over.” She stood up and headed towards the crew bunks in the small sleeping quarters of the vessel.

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Obi-Wan relaxed in the pilot’s chair in the cockpit. Ahsoka next to him in the co-pilot seat. They had just taken the second hyperspace jump on their way back to Yavin 4.

He sighed. “I have a favour to ask of you.” He turned in his seat to look at her. “Two...actually.”

Ahsoka blinked. Nodding at him to continue.

“When we get back to the Rebel Base I need you to help me train Rey.” He paused. “And Luke.” He added as an afterthought. He looked down at his lap. “I’m afraid I’m going to make mistakes like I did with Anakin.”

“You didn’t —”

“I did.” He cut her off. Nodding to himself. It was something that took him years to accept. But he knew it was the truth. He met her eyes. “I made a lot of mistakes. Too many. I need someone to question me. I need someone to make sure I am training properly. Rey is different than other Padawan’s. She is very much like Anakin.”

Ahsoka frowned. “In what way?”

Obi-Wan gave her a rueful grin. “What have you heard about Jakku?”

He watched as Ahsoka ran the name of the planet through her head. Trying to remember if she knew anything about it.

She squinted. “Not much. I think I may have heard about it from one of my connections. They mentioned that they heard from someone that there might have been something there that interested the Emperor...but they didn’t know what.” She looked at Obi-Wan carefully. “It was very hush-hush. They couldn’t tell me anything else. I wasn’t even sure the information was legit. I
heard about Jakku maybe a month before Malachor.” She shook her head. “There was something there...wasn’t there?”

“I think so.” Obi-Wan said quietly. “In Rey’s timeline, Jakku was the location of the final Battle — as she said earlier.” Ahsoka nodded. “The Empire made its last stand over a desert world. There had to be a reason.”

Ahsoka hummed. “I agree.”

“Rey grew up scavenging crashed Star Destroyers. She had been doing that since she was six.” He paused, waiting for Ahsoka to understand what he wasn’t saying. “I realize she’s had a difficult upbringing, much like Anakin had. I also realize that I have had a very sheltered life with the Order. On Tatooine, I was very much left alone. I kept to myself as much as I could. I didn’t want to attract attention from the wrong sort.”

Obi-Wan hesitated for a moment before continuing on. “She has a lot of anger. And to be blunt, I believe it is justified. The Republic Alliance — the governing body after the Empire fell, dropped the ball.” He focused on Ahsoka in front of him. “Big time. A lot of people did.”

Ahsoka nodded. “I can help. I’ll help you train.” She frowned. “Rey’s told you this about the Republic?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “I am going to tell you something that you cannot tell anyone.” He paused, waiting for Ahsoka to focus entirely on him. “Vader gave Rey his datapad to give to me to know how far she has come with her training. What to expect, what to try to correct. In the write up he has of Rey’s training that they did together, he has told me some information about her. Things he’s learned about her. Life experiences. Stuff she has told him.” He looked down to the floor. “Vader was the first person that has ever offered to help Rey. I believe with anything. She’s experienced rejection after rejection throughout her life as far as he could tell.”

“We need to support her. Have her back.” Ahsoka said quietly. “Show her that she isn’t alone.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I agree.”

He sighed. Rubbed his beard in thought. “I was also wondering...in Rey’s time, Luke was used as a public figure for the rebellion in order to gain more support. The Jedi who destroyed the Death Star.” He shook his head. “I don’t want him to be the...spokesperson if you will. I don’t want him
to be a pawn.”

“You want me to join you in that roll,” Ahsoka finished for him. Understanding what he didn’t want to say.

Obi-Wan nodded hesitantly. “I know you left the Order...I respect that. I even understand it now. But I think it could be a good message to send.”

“I would lose my ability to get information for the Rebels,” Ahsoka countered. She shrugged. “But...at the same time, I think I’ve been gone for too long. I’d have to rebuild my contacts. My connections. The trust between myself and my contacts.” She paused. Pondering what Obi-Wan asked of her. She gave him a curt nod. Decision made. “I will do it. For you. I will stand by your side on those recruitment posters. Hell...I’ll make a statement over the HoloNet if you want. I’ll even wave my lightsabers around for good measure.”

Obi-Wan chuckled. “Thank you.”

Ahsoka smirked at him. “No Kenobi.” She looked him dead in the eyes. “Thank you.”
Chapter 12

“Rey,” a feminine voice said quietly in Rey’s ear. “Rey it's time to get up...we are almost at the base.”

Rey jerked awake. Blinking the sleep from her eyes. “Almost...where?” Ahsoka was standing next to her bunk. She yawned.

“At the base,” Ahsoka grinned. “You’ve been sleeping for the better part of the day.”

Rey rolled out of her bunk. “I’m so sorry...I didn’t mean to sleep so long.” She rubbed her eyes. She felt groggy. Sluggish.

Ahsoka chuckled. “It’s alright. Obi-Wan and I took turns. I haven’t flown in a while. It was a nice change for me. Gave us a chance to catch up.”

Rey hid her yawn behind her hand. Slowly she began to wake up. She hadn’t had that deep of a sleep in ages it seemed.

Ahsoka turned to leave the sleeping quarters. “Come. We must prepare for landing.”

Rey followed her out of the room, into the main part of the ship and then into the cockpit.

“Good morning, Rey,” Obi-Wan’s kind voice said to her as she took the copilot chair after Ahsoka took the jump seat off to the side.

“Good morning.” She frowned. “Is it morning?” She looked to Obi-Wan.

He nodded. “It should be if I timed everything properly.” He grinned.

The ship signaled that it was about to leave hyperspace. Obi-Wan grabbed the controls and held his breath.
The gas giant came into view. Yavin. It’s moon, Yavin 4, off in the distance.

Obi-Wan exhaled slowly. Relaxing once more.

Rey raised a brow. “You were nervous.”

He nodded. “I wasn’t sure if there would be Imperial ships waiting for us.”

Rey nodded in understanding. “I think in my time, everyone was able to leave before anyone showed up.” She paused. “They just abandoned the base and found a new one.”

“Could that still happen you think?” Ahsoka asked from behind Rey.

Rey hesitated. “I don’t think so. In my time...the destruction of the Death Star was referred to as the Battle of Yavin. I think in this time, it’ll be known as the Battle of Alderaan.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “We won’t be able to stay here forever though. We will have to find another base eventually.”

Rey hummed in understanding. She wondered if they’d be going to Hoth next. She shivered. A snow planet was not something she was looking forward to.

Obi-Wan flicked on the radio, hailing the Rebel base as they flew closer to the green moon.
“Attention, attention. This is the negotiator with an extra package for delivery. I’m looking for a safe place to land.”


Obi-Wan took them closer to the base. Slowly making his way closer to the hanger. He carefully set the ship down. Running through all of the shutdown procedures.
Silence.

Rey sighed.

Obi-Wan quirked his head at Rey. “Before we leave our vessel, I just wanted to let you know that whatever it is you need to say to the chancellor, I will have your back.” He gestured to Ahsoka. “Ahsoka too.”

Rey nodded. “Thank you.” She narrowed her eyes at Obi-Wan wondering what Vader said in his notes on her. “What if she wants to know everything that happened? I don’t know what to say. So much has changed already.”

Obi-Wan nodded at her. “What did you say to Vader? Did you tell him everything?”

Rey shook her head. “No...the Force told me it was important to tell him some things. But I didn’t tell him everything. Mostly just about his family. Scarif. How he died. A bit about my time. Not too much else. We mostly just talked about other things.”

Ahsoka chuckled. “Then you pull the Jedi card and say that the Force is telling you to keep it to yourself. Say it’s too dangerous if they know.”

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement. “The more mystical sounding, the better. It always works for me.” He sighed before continuing. “Your time travel stays between you, me, Ahsoka, Mon, and Vader. No one else. Perhaps Draven...you included him in our meeting a few days ago, so we will probably have to.”


Obi-Wan frowned. “Should they be told?” He asked Rey. “Luke and Leia are going to be dealing with a lot quite soon. Should Han even know? He’s just a pilot, a smuggler.”

Rey grinned. “He saved Luke above the Death Star. He can be trusted. He’s a smuggler yes, but he can be trusted with anything.” Rey paused, in shock. She looked at Obi-Wan with huge eyes. She had forgotten. She’d be seeing Han Solo alive once more. She hid her face behind her hands.
“Rey,” Obi-Wan quietly said to her. “Rey...what happened? Something happened to him, didn’t it? In your time...”

She nodded. Taking a deep breath. “I watched his son drive his lightsaber through him on Starkiller Base. Han was trying to bring him home.”

Obi-Wan nodded in understanding. Placing a comforting hand on her shoulder.

“Rey...that won’t happen this time,” Ahsoka said quietly to her. “We have time to prevent it.”

Rey sniffed, nodding her head. She exhaled slowly. Taking time to gather herself, she checked her shields. She was alright. They were still strong.

Obi-Wan removed his hand from her shoulder. “Do you think Luke and Leia should be told of your time travel?”

Rey looked at her hands in her lap. “Eventually. They will eventually need to know. My lightsaber is the same as Luke’s, is it not?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “It is.” He sighed. “We will deal with it when we get there. How about that?”

Rey gave him a small smile. Nodding.

The three of them stood up from their seats before grabbing their bags — or in Ahsoka’s case, her canteen of water — and made their way off of the ship. They made their way into the base, the day was still early. The majority of people were still sleeping. A few foot guards nodded their welcome.

“Mon will be awake. She’s likely already in the command center,” Obi-Wan said to the two of them.

They made their way down the hallway leading into the command center. Stepping through the
The door, Rey spotted Chancellor Mothma and another man and woman sitting around the table, speaking quietly with one another.

She grinned at the arrivals. Drawing the conversation with the other individuals present to a close.

The two people left the room.

Mon stood up from her seat at the table. “Ahsoka. It’s a pleasure to see you again. It’s been far too long.” She clasped Ahsoka’s hand in greeting.

“It’s good to see you as well, Mon.” Ahsoka replied with a grin. She sat herself in a chair at the table. Made herself comfortable.

Rey took a seat next to Ahsoka. Obi-Wan sat on the other side of her.

Mon looked between the Force users. “Shall we get started then? We have our daily meeting in a couple of hours. So we do have time to talk before then.”

Rey exhaled slowly. Nervous. Unsure. She gave Mon a shaky nod. Clasped her hands in her lap.

“What can you tell me about what will happen, Rey?” Mon smiled at her. Her eyes warm.

Rey looked the chancellor right in the eyes. “Nothing.”

Mothma’s shock permeated the room. “Excuse me? We have the opportunity to use what you know to win this war quickly.”

Rey cracked a grin, her eyes cold. She was angry. “I am not an object you can use. I am not a weapon, I am a person. I don’t work for free. I never have.”

Mon looked between the Force sensitives facing her. “You agree with this?” She asked Kenobi pointedly.
He nodded. “I do. I’ve learned some things about Rey’s time. I think you need to listen closely to what she has to say to you.”


Rey gave her a nod. She exhaled slowly, making sure her shields weren’t about to fall apart. Get to the point, be blunt, the Force whispered to her. She cleared her throat. “In my time...I could not tell the difference between the Republic Alliance, and the Galactic Empire as it is today. Your New Republic that you are so keen on implementing, is practically the same, from my point of view. I have also been told that the Old Republic was identical to your new one. Apparently you lot never learned your lesson.” She swallowed, frowning. “You never felt the need to correct the flaws of that government. In turn, your fancy New Republic was obliterated after a few short decades by the seeds of the Empire that remained.”

Rey sighed. “I grew up on Jakku. Jakku was the location of the final battle before the Empire retreated into the Unknown Regions. After the fall, the Republic Alliance formed their government. They changed Empire Day to Remembrance Day, to remember all of the lives lost during the war. To remember the destruction of Alderaan.” She smiled at Mon, who was exceptionally pale. “Do you know what your Republic did for Jakku. For the people of Jakku after you tore apart their homeland and left it to rot?”

“What?” Mon was quiet.

Rey snorted. “Absolutely nothing. There was nothing there for Jakku to trade. You focused on rebuilding the core words. You forgot about the Outer Rim planets. You forgot about the Inner Rim planets — they weren’t Core you see. Anyone outside the Core was ignored. Sound familiar?”

Mon looked down at the table in front of her. “We didn’t set up a government on those planets?”

Rey frowned. “Technically, I suppose you did. I can’t speak for everywhere else, but I know that on Jakku, your government lasted for less than a year before Niima the Hutt took over. It was a scam. There was no representation for Jakku in the senate. It was merely lip service.”

Mon nodded sadly. She wouldn’t look at anyone.

“The lack of functioning government allowed for the First Order to take control. They stole
children from Outer Rim planets. Made them into stormtroopers. Made them into slaves fighting
for a cause that they had no say in.” Rey shook her head, thinking of Finn. “Your Republic was
warned repeatedly about what was happening, but the information wasn’t listened to. The senate
didn’t like listening to someone whose biological father was a known villain in the story.
Apparently it made senators uneasy. Caused them to label the individual in question as a
warmonger and as a fanatic before they were basically kicked out of the senate.”

Rey shook her head. Sneering at the chancellor. “As usual, you politicians only looked after
yourselves. You didn’t give two piles of banthashit about anyone else.” Pleasantries forgotten. Her
Inner Rim upbringing was proudly shining through. Rey held on tightly to her shields. She could
feel her walls wobbling from her fury.

She exhaled slowly. Could feel Obi-Wan trying to calm her down once more via the Force.

Mon sat there in shock. Her eyes sad. Tired. Ashamed.

“Leia Organa was kicked out of the senate?” She asked Rey quietly. “I — I think she is an
exceptional politician in the making. She takes after her biological mother...her adoptive parents. I
allowed that to happen?”

Rey smirked. “She takes after her biological father more. I know her as General Organa, not
Princess Leia.”

Ahsoka started snickering. “Skyguy would be ecstatic.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “That or he’d be absolutely terrified.”

Mon rubbed her face. She let out a breath. “What can I do for you, Rey? How do we make this
right?”

Rey nodded. “I can try to help the Rebels...but I have changed a lot already. I don’t know if it’ll
actually help, or hinder everything. That and I don’t know everything, I swear. I was given a crash
course over a weeks’ time about the history of the Rebels and the Empire. I know some
things...I’m sure I’ve forgotten more. A lot of it may not even be applicable anymore.” She
swallowed. “I do know that there needs to be changes in how it...ended...in my time. Too many
people died.”
Mon nodded slowly. Rey could feel her mind whirring. “Perhaps you can advise...see if it seems right to you? See if certain events trigger anything for you.”

Rey nodded. “It depends on what the Force tells me. It may be dangerous.” A non-answer.

Mon nodded slowly. “Alright.” Confusion wafted against Rey.

Obi-Wan sighed, drawing the attention of the room to himself. “I believe that that is probably good enough for now. But, we should all be open to having more discussions in the future.”

Rey nodded.

“I think it is important that we understand that no matter how heated these discussions may be, we must remember that we are all on the same side. We all are aiming for the same thing: the end of the Empire. The end of Palpatine.” He looked pointedly at Mothma.

She gave him a nod. “I understand. No hard feelings. No grudges.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “I would also like to put it out there that Luke will not be used as a spokesperson for the rebellion. If you need Jedi representation to gain more support, myself and Ahsoka will fill that role.”

Mon frowned. “But he was the Jedi Knight who destroyed the Death Star.”

Obi-Wan raised a brow. “Oh...was he? I didn’t realize he was knighted. As far as I am concerned he is a Padawan learner. He has barely been trained.”

“But —”

“I fired the proton torpedoes at the Death Star,” Ahsoka chimed in. “Don’t you remember, Mon?” She grinned at the chancellor.

Rey watched as Mothma finally understood what they were saying.
A slow grin erupted on her face. “It was a great shot Ahsoka,” she complimented the togruta.

Ahsoka snickered. “Thanks.”

Amusement hummed against Rey. The tension in the room decreased.

“Also...I must speak with Luke and Leia. I owe both of them the truth about their father’s identity.” Obi-Wan looked sadly at the table. “They need to know what happened...they need to understand.”

“I can come with you, if you like,” Rey offered the Jedi Knight. “I can try to explain what I know. The...reasons behind his...choice.” She shrugged. “I’ve spent almost every single day with him for the last couple of months. We shared stories about...our upbringings. Everything.” She looked to Obi-Wan. “I can help.”

Obi-Wan smiled at Rey but shook his head. “I need to do this on my own. I put him in that suit. I helped make him into the Sith he is today. It’s the least I owe Anakin. And Padmé.” He looked at the time on the wall. “They should be awake by now. There is no point in delaying it any longer.” He got up from his seat at the table. “I will find you later today, Rey. We can meditate together.”

Rey nodded. “Alright.”

Obi-Wan gave her a tired smile and left the room. The door shutting on his way out.

Mon cleared her throat. “We only have one available spare room for you two right now. Two bunks. A refresher. Even a small desk. Did you want me to show you where it is?” She looked between Ahsoka and Rey.

Ahsoka nodded eagerly. “I’d love that. I also need some extra clothes. And toiletries if that’s at all possible.” She sniffed an armpit to make a point. “I need a wash too.”

Mon smiled, nodding. “Do you need clothes and toiletries as well?” She asked Rey.
Rey nodded, she didn’t really understand what toiletries were exactly, but she did need some other clothes. “I just have what I’m wearing plus some Imperial workout clothes and pajamas.”

Mothma nodded, giving her a smile. “I will get those for you as well then. I have to ask though...have you had your shots?”

Rey frowned. “My what?”

“Your shots. Vaccinations. Birth control. Flu shots,” Mon explained to her. “I assume Jakku didn’t have them, but did you get them after you left?”

Rey frowned. She shook her head. “I’ve had nothing.” She wrapped her arms around herself. Self-conscious. “Is that bad?”

Mon shook her head. “No...not bad. But you should have them. You are surrounded by a number of people, in relatively close quarters. You are no longer isolated with only Vader as company. You will likely get sick.” She stood up from her spot at the table. “I will get a medical droid to give you your shots. Later today if they can find the time. Perhaps tomorrow. Let’s get the two of you settled in.” She gestured for the two Force users to follow her out of the command center.

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Obi-Wan led Luke and Leia out into the forest, away from the rebel base. Leia was sporting a mourning braid in her hair, but had otherwise looked alright. Sadness was emitting from her, but also acceptance.

Luke was nervous. Worried about what Obi-Wan was about to tell the two of them.

Obi-Wan sighed as he made his way into the small clearing. Logs laid out on the forest floor, providing excellent backrests or seating. Depending on one’s preference.

Obi-Wan gestured for the two of them to find a seat. He sat down carefully on a wide log.

Luke plopped down on the forest floor in front of him, sitting cross-legged. Leia looked at him
strangely before following her brother. Anakin’s two children peered up at him. Curious about what he was about to tell them.

Obi-Wan exhaled slowly, trying to figure out the best place to start. He cleared his throat. “I have something that I need to tell the two of you. It is extremely important that you know. That you understand.”


Obi-Wan shook his head. “I’m not your Master right now Luke. I am the Jedi Knight that was friends with your father.”

Leia nodded slowly. He could feel her mind whirring. Putting the pieces together. “It’s about Scarif, isn’t it?”

Luke looked over to her. “Why? What all happened?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I need to explain.” He sighed. “About...twenty-two, twenty-three years ago, Anakin Skywalker got married in secret to Padmé Amidala on Naboo. At that time, he was still my Padawan. I had no idea that he had gotten married. It was actually brought to my attention recently.”


“A few years later Padmé got pregnant with the pair of you.” He gestured. “As you both know already.” He sighed. “During that time, the Clone Wars were occurring. The Jedi were used as Generals to fight a war for the man who would later become Emperor Palpatine.”

Leia nodded. “He played both sides and used them to gain power. To gain control. He disbanded the Republic and created the Galactic Empire after the slaughter of the Jedi Order and separatists.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “That is correct.”

“He’s a manipulative bastard.” Leia raised a brow at him. Eyes hard.
Obi-Wan fought a grin. It was the perfect segue. “That he is. He manipulated a lot of people, including your mother and father.”


Obi-Wan thought carefully. “He’s originally from Naboo...that’s basically how he manipulated your mother...for some time at least before she saw him for his true self.”


Leia frowned. “How did he manipulate Anakin?”

Obi-Wan blew out a deep breath. “He told Anakin that he’d be able to save Padmé, if he just did everything he asked.” He frowned. “It was more than that...he had been manipulating him since he was a small boy. But...that is something I can explain another time.”

“Why did mother need saving?” Luke was curious. Leia was watching him closely.

“Some Force users are able to have visions. Most of the time, these visions don’t come true...they’re just a...possible outcome, rather than actual fact.” Obi-Wan frowned. “Anakin had two visions. The both of them came true. The first one was when he was still my Padawan. He was your age, just nineteen at the time. He dreamt that his mother, Shmi Skywalker, was going to be killed.” Obi-Wan looked down at his lap. “His dream was brushed aside by everyone in the Jedi Order, including myself. No one believed it was a true vision. Just a bad dream.” He cleared his throat. “His second vision was of Padmé dying.”

“Oh,” Leia said softly. Her eyes wide.

“I never knew of the vision until a short time ago.” Obi-Wan continued. “I found out that he went to Grand Master Yoda for help, and was brushed off once more. Palpatine, however was more than eager to offer his help.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “He did. Palpatine was the Sith Lord the Jedi Order were looking for. He somehow got Anakin to pledge his allegiance to him. To become his...apprentice. He gave Anakin a new name. He called him…” He struggled to continue. “He called him...Darth Vader.”

Leia hid her mouth behind her hands. Her eyes were shining. Understanding wafting hard against Obi-Wan.

Luke remained motionless. “What...there must be some mistake. You’re mistaken.” He glared at Obi-Wan. “My father was a Jedi. You said so yourself.”

Obi-Wan raised a palm, trying to calm Luke down. “Luke...I’m the one who put him in that suit. I defeated him in battle and left him burning, limbless on Mustafar.” He swallowed. “Your mother was unconscious. I needed to get her to a medical center. I left him there...to die.” He looked at Luke sadly. “I’m sorry. I failed him. I am so sorry.”

Luke opened and closed his mouth, trying to think of something to say. Watching Obi-Wan suspiciously.

Leia grasped his hand. “Scarif makes sense now. What happened…”

Luke turned his attention to his sister. Obi-Wan watched curiously. Wanting to know just what she had picked up on.


Leia looked at her brother sadly. “Vader helped us escape. Told us to stay tight to his Destroyer as we plugged in our hyperspace coordinates.” She frowned. “He told the rebels to protect me. I felt his longing. His...familiarity. I had felt it before when I was a little girl. I didn’t understand it then.” She squeezed her brother’s hand. “I felt his shame above Scarif. Like he didn’t want me to see him. To see the monster.”

Luke looked back at Obi-Wan, hurt pressing hard against Obi-Wan’s shields. He looked down at his lap. Frowning. Thinking.
Obi-Wan waited.

Luke looked up at him again. “My father is a Sith Lord...not a Jedi Knight.”

Obi-Wan sighed. “Yes and no. He was a Jedi Knight...a fantastic Jedi Knight. He is also a Sith Lord. He was a good Jedi...he just also is good at being a Sith.”

Luke nodded slowly. “He’s dark though…”

Obi-Wan hesitated. “There is light and dark in all of us, Luke. It’s our actions that determine who we are as individuals.

“He can’t be fully dark,” Leia murmured quietly. “If he was...he wouldn’t have helped us flee. He wouldn’t have been concerned about my safety.”

Luke frowned again. “I think...I think he was behind me above the Death Star.” He looked up at Obi-Wan. “I could feel this...overwhelming fear around me. It got stronger and stronger as the squadron I was in got shot down.” He looked at his lap. “It was mixed in with...a sort of familiarity. And encouragement. Like someone was trying to encourage me to open myself up in the Force to fire the torpedoes.” He shook his head. “I thought I was a goner. Han told me afterwards that the TIE behind me pulled in front of another TIE and fired on them. Chewy took out the second TIE...the one in the front apparently had to spin out of the way to avoid getting hit.”

*Family before anything else.* Obi-Wan closed his eyes in understanding. Anakin was beginning to break through. The boy from Tatooine was gaining strength once more.


Obi-Wan shook his head. “He got away in time. The TIE Fighter that arrived here a few days ago is his. A young woman named Rey flew it in. She found herself in a bit of trouble and he helped her.” He paused. “She is also Force sensitive.”
Leia frowned. Curious.


Obi-Wan sighed. “She is his Padawan...I will be taking over in her training. As will another...Force user. Ahsoka Tano was Anakin’s Padawan back in the Jedi Order. She was the reason I left here the other day. She has been missing for a number of years. I needed to bring her home.”

Luke nodded. “Will she also train me? Or just this Rey?”

“Both of you,” Obi-Wan told him quietly. “Leia too, if she wishes.” He raised a brow at her.

Leia looked down to the ground. A small grin on her face. She shook her head. “I still don’t wish to be trained. I will keep working on my shields. I don’t want to know anything else. It’s not something that interests me.”

Obi-Wan nodded. He understood where she was coming from.

He hesitated. “I am somewhat surprised that you’ve accepted the...identity of your father so well Leia...can I ask why?” According to Rey, Leia hadn’t been able to stomach the thought of Darth Vader as her father. He frowned internally...according to Rey, her Leia was tortured for hours by Vader. He hummed in understanding. That was why. At least partially. She had seen the monster up close and personal.

“I suppose...I kind of knew. Scarif didn’t make sense.” Leia shook her head. “You talking about Palpatine before...everything...I could see where the conversation was headed.” She shrugged. “Maybe it hasn’t hit me yet. I don’t know.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly.

He focused on Luke in front of him. He was lost in thought. “How are you handling it, Luke?”

Luke frowned. “I don’t know. I don’t understand how someone could...do that. How someone could side with the Emperor.”
“He believed it to be his only option. It was war time.” Obi-Wan hesitated. “He...made a mistake. A lot of mistakes.” He sighed. “I don’t think...I don’t think his fall to the darkside happened overnight. I think it was a long time coming. I think everyone, including myself, were too blind to see it.”

“But...the Emperor.” A quiet voice. Confused.

Obi-Wan frowned. He was trying to figure out what Luke was hung up on. He rubbed his beard, thinking back to the chatter on Tatooine. The Empire had slaves. To Luke, the Emperor was no different than Jabba the Hutt. And Anakin standing next to Palpatine told Luke that he too supported the use of slaves. That the freed slave boy supported slavery. He sighed. The issue was so simple, but so incredibly complex. He thought back to the clones. The fight to give them rights. The use of them by the Jedi Order to fight a war they should’ve stayed out of. He thought of little Anakin being bet on by Qui-Gon Jinn in order to get him away from Tatooine. He thought of little Anakin flinching when he was told by his instructors to refer to them as Master. It took months for him to stop.

He pinched the bridge of his nose. “It’s exceptionally complex Luke. I don’t know if I can answer it adequately.” He sighed. “It’s...it’s not as straightforward as it should be.”

He went back to what he knew, the Force whispered in his ear. Obi-Wan bit his lip to prevent himself from weeping.


He scratched at his shirt. His stomach gurgled loudly.

The spell was broken. Obi-Wan grinned. “How about you find something to eat. Breakfast should be served by now.”

Luke gave him a sheepish grin. Leia smirked at her brother, before he stood up from his spot on the floor and pulled her up with him.

“You coming with us?”
Obi-Wan shook his head. “I’ll eat in the meeting that starts an hour from now. I have some things I need to do before then.”

~ | ~

Obi-Wan sat on his bunk, clutching the datapad. He opened a new word document and started writing.

Filling Vader — *Anakin* — in. Informing him that a certain Padawan was safe. He frowned when he thought about his and Rey’s bond. He really didn’t know what to tell him.

He thought for a moment and typed some more. Possible areas of research. Possible ideas.

He sighed at the finished product. A mishmash of topics. He shrugged. Hit the save button, flicked the datapad off and hid it back in his bag, before leaving his room to head towards the command center for the daily meeting.

~ | ~

Rey sat on her fluffy pillow in a clearing in the forest with Obi-Wan sitting directly in front of her. She was nervous. Uneasy.

“Why are you so nervous?” Obi-Wan quietly asked her. He grasped her hands. Holding them gently.

“I’ve never done this on a planet before. I’m afraid it’ll be too much.” She sighed.

Obi-Wan hummed. “I won’t let you reach out too far. I am your anchor...I will keep you close by.”

Rey nodded. Swallowing. She closed her eyes. Exhaling slowly, she let herself reach out. She opened up. Carefully. Cautiously.
“That’s it.” A squeeze of her hands. Reminding her he was near. “Tell me what you see. What you feel.”

Rey hummed. Gasping when she began to feel the life humming around her. Everything was so alive. “I can feel the trees. The critters moving around. I can feel you in front of me.” She swallowed. “I think I can see the base. The people there.” She frowned. “I can feel the...dead underneath. The decomposing foliage. The...dead critters.”

“Yes...life and death. It’s all connected.” Another squeeze of her hands.

“I can see...shadows. Darkness. Cloaked and hidden away,” Rey was nervous. Uneasy.

“Shhh...it’s alright. Light and dark are connected. You cannot have one without the other.” Obi-Wan tried to comfort her. “How about we pull away from that for now? Can you focus on a tree close by? Can you tell me what’s in it?”

Rey pulled closer to herself. Focusing on her near surroundings. She picked a tall tree. Huge. It reminded her of the trees on Takodana. Rey hummed, curiously examining the life in the tree. “The tree is alive...its...leaves?” She frowned. Searching. Exploring. “Up high in the tree...there is something. I don’t know what it is. A creature.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “About how high up would you say it is?”

Rey exhaled slowly. “Maybe fifteen, twenty feet.”

“A threat?”

Rey shook her head. “No...it’s just curious.” She swallowed. “I think it’s watching us.”

Obi-Wan squeezed her hands. “Its curious about us funny looking humans sitting near its home.”

Rey grinned. Sighing. “I like this. It’s...relaxing.”
“It can be,” Obi-Wan agreed. “It can help the Force user understand their place in everything. Living things all interconnected. Cycles of life and death. Light and dark. All together.”

“Balance,” Rey murmured quietly.

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement. “Balance.”
Vader quickly made his way into his medical room, body aching more than usual from Palpatine’s wrath. He winced at a sharp pull in his side. His chest hurt. Head hurt. Legs were beginning to shake.

He needed to get into his bacta tank.

Now.

He stepped in front of the controls and selected the appropriate cycle. The strongest one his bacta tank had.

He sneered. He knew his bacta was garbage. No matter what his Master told him, he knew he was receiving low quality product. He could find this shit on Tatooine.

SD-2826 rolled up beside him. “I will guard you Master Vader. You must rest. You must heal.”

Vader nodded curtly. It hurt far too much to do anything more than that.

His medical droids situated around him, preparing to help him into his tank.

“One. Two. And three.” His helmet was pulled off and a breathing mask quickly covered his mouth, nose, and eyes. He blinked rapidly at the bright lights of the room. The eyepieces of his helmet no longer filtering it.

His armour began to be removed. Cape. Shoulder guards. His life support panel. Quickly his suit was peeled down to his waist. Followed by his cybernetic arms.

Straps around his shoulders. Strong enough to hold him up without his legs.

His belt, boots, and the rest of his suit were removed. Followed by his cybernetic legs.
He winced as the shoulder straps cut in slightly as he was moved into his tank. The door sealed shut. His tank began to fill from the bottom up.

Relief soon came. A cool, soothing sensation on his flesh.

He took as deep a breath as he could. Wincing at the pull in his side once more. He must’ve broken a rib or two during Sidious’ Force lightning punishment. It must’ve happened when he hit the table in his quarters. Or perhaps when he hit the wall...he couldn’t be sure.

No matter. He had worse before. The injury would be healed by the time he left his tank.

His tank beeped. Indicating the cycle had begun.

Vader blinked some more. Trying to clear his head. He should meditate. Try to relax.

He sighed. He could never relax. Instead he went over the last few days in his head.

Sidious knew nothing. He was far too shocked at the destruction of his superweapon to efficiently check Vader’s mind.

He saw what Vader wanted him to see. Nothing more. Nothing less.

He allowed him to see his argument against firing at Alderaan. He allowed him to see his reasoning. Alderaan was a core world — the action that was taken was risky. Especially without the Death Star around anymore to supplement the Imperial Navy.

Sidious saw it. Understood it. The Empire had taken a huge hit.

His Master’s anger didn’t come until a day or so after he arrived on the Devastator. His frustration at the incompetence of his soldiers. Of Vader.
Vader paid the price for Tarkin’s idiotic idea to broadcast the Death Star’s location across the galaxy. The fool was lucky he was already dead.

He paid the price for the Rebels being able to pass through the shield around the Death Star in their single-seater x-wings. Regardless of the fact that he wasn’t part of the design team that allowed it to happen. He knew how much damage a single-seater fighter could do.

Vader paid the price for not being able to shoot the x-wings in the trench out of commission. He shrugged to himself. Sidious had him there. He wouldn't shoot down his own son.

Ever.

He wondered how the Rebels would play that success with Kenobi there with them. Would he allow Luke to be the beacon of light the Rebels were so desperate to find? It was risky. Luke was barely trained in the Force. He’d have a target on his back until the Empire fell. Possibly longer. Would Kenobi allow that to happen?

No.

He was there to protect Luke. And Leia. He would continue to do so for as long as he could.

Vader relaxed. He wanted to see what they did. He wanted to see what Kenobi could pull off.

He grinned ever so slightly.

*Politics.* As much as Obi-Wan hated politicians, he could play politics with the best of them if he needed to. He could hold his own.

He let that thought fill his mind as he began to drift off into a light sleep. He was exhausted.

~ | ~

Sitting at his workbench, Vader finished up repairing one more training droid. Well...re-assigned
training droid he supposed. It was now another guard droid. Three guards were nowhere near enough.

He switched the droid on. “GD-7856. You will convene with GD-2301 on the lower level to hear your duties.”

“Yes Master Vader. It is an honour to be at your service.” The droid made its way out of his medical facility.

Vader sat for a moment before turning his attention the the last salvageable droid. This one was a mess. It would take him weeks to finish it. He shook his head. He supposed he had nothing better to do at the moment. The Emperor had allowed him to rest until he needed him again. He needed to restructure certain roles within the Empire.

A chime signaled from his datapad laying haphazardly on his work surface. Vader quirked his head. Kenobi?

He turned the screen on and went searching for the message. Blinking as he spotted a newly created document. He clicked it open.

_Rey safe. Arrived three days ago. Spoke with chancellor today._

_Read documents. Thankful for notes on Rey. Helpful._

_Thank you for the information she came with. Will be helpful in future._

_Unsure about bond. Perhaps an exceptionally strong Force bond of some sort. Did anything happen between the two of you in the weeks prior? Maybe played a part…_

_Do not have access to find out more. There were holocrons at the Temple that discussed various bonds. We only had to understand Master-Padawan bonds and a few others, but I am certain there was more information there at one point._

_Have all the Jedi holocrons been destroyed?_
I may pay a visit with an old friend. I will ask them what they think.

Informed your children what happened.

Vader blinked. He didn’t understand what Kenobi meant with the last part. Informed your children what happened. What happened when? He frowned. Surely he didn’t mean…

No. He wouldn’t. Would he?

Vader felt uneasy. He already knew the answer. Luke and Leia had learned what their father did. Who their father was today.

He swallowed. Shaking his head. He didn’t want to think about it. He’d deal with it later.

He began typing a response to Kenobi’s document. Thinking of Rey. Jakku. He needed to think for a bit about their bond. He’d reply to that part later.

Right now he needed to find out more about her home world. He should’ve asked her more when she was with him.

He read over his note to Kenobi.

Must think more about bond. Will get back to you.

Found something about Jakku on Death Star. Unsure what it means. No longer have access to information. Only read partially. Can you ask Rey more about her home? Places. Settlements. Abandoned places. Talk from the locals. No matter how insignificant she believes it to be.

Can you also ask her more about Carbon Ridge? Get her to tell you about it…perhaps I missed something.
He saved the file and set his datapad back down on his work surface.

He needed to get to work on the last droid.

~ | ~

Four days later Vader was informed that the Rebels had made a move. They had somehow sliced into the HoloNet on the Imperial run channels and were apparently looking for recruits.

It was ballsy. He wondered why they’d take such a high risk.

Vader brought up a recording of the video on his device.

Ahsoka stared back at him. Arms crossed with a sly grin on her face as the voice over — Kenobi — stated that she was the individual who destroyed the Death Star.

Vader blinked.

“...looking for those who have been forgotten by the Empire. Those who have been used and abused by the Empire. The Republic Alliance is looking for anyone who wishes to have their voices heard.” A beat of silence before a banner was dropped down behind Ahsoka. The rebellion symbol proudly displayed.

Ahsoka reached her palms out. Her lightsabers flew into them from somewhere off camera. Igniting them she crouched into a fighting pose and snarled at the camera before giving it a wink. The video went dark.

Vader blinked. He held back his grin. Held back his relief that Ahsoka had been found. Focused his attention once more on Sidious waiting for him to respond in their Holocall.

“How high is the bounty on this...Jedi?” He sneered. Ahsoka was no Jedi, but that didn’t matter to Sidious.
“Twenty million credits,” Sidious replied. “Twenty-five million for Kenobi, upgraded from his fifteen million that was already in place.” He paused. “Dead or alive for both. Proof of identity a must for payment.” He steepled his hands in front of his face. “You last saw the togruta on Malachor…”

Vader nodded from his kneeling position on the floor. “Yes Master. Three years ago. The floor collapsed underneath me. I didn’t know where she went. I couldn’t see her as I climbed out of the rubble.” He paused. “I couldn’t breathe.”

Sidious waved off his excuse. “No matter. What’s done is done. I hope you have healed well. You do understand why I had to do what I did…”

Vader nodded. “Yes Master. I failed my mission.”

“Good. I am pleased you understand the position that you put me in with your failure.” Sidious smiled at him. “I would like you to find them. Get help from outside sources if you must. A bounty hunter perhaps. I will be most displeased if you should fail once more.” The Holocall ended.

Vader remained kneeling on the floor of his medical facility.

Fuck.

~ | ~

Vader stood in the command center of his ship, recently repaired from his earlier excursion to Mustafar. His Destroyer was still hovering over the planet. He needed to make a decision on where to begin the search.

He didn’t know what to do. Past missions with Kenobi? He wasn’t sure how long he’d be able to do that before Sidious caught on. What about old Republic hide outs? Former bases that the Galactic Republic Navy’s used. He knew a lot of them were now populated with Imperial forces, but there were still a fair number that were supposed to be uninhabited. Seen as unfit for the Empire. Too old.

He hissed. That had to be where they were hiding. It was a well-known assumption that the Rebels were housed in old bases. Moving around after some time and settling into another old Republic
base. If they had a decent mechanic and technician they’d be able to get the base up and running again in a matter of days.

And they had the talent. The slicing into the Imperial HoloNet illustrated that clearly. The Empire’s own slicers couldn’t track where the message was sent from. They’d hit a dead end, stating the video had originated from the Imperial Palace.

Vader smirked. They must have had someone on the inside far closer than anyone realized. That or Kenobi just believed it to be amusing if it was tracked to a location that was the former Jedi Temple. A giant flashing ‘Fuck you’ to the Emperor.

The Force hummed in agreement. It was personal.

“What is the plan, Lord Vader?” Montferrat asked him quietly, bringing him out of his thoughts.

“I am not sure,” he admitted quietly to the captain. “I do not know where to begin.”

He watched as Montferrat nodded slowly. Cautiously. “Permission to speak in private, my Lord?”

Vader nodded, gesturing for him to lead the way into a private room off of the command center.

The captain turned around to face Vader once the door closed, preventing anyone from listening in from the outside.

“You can speak freely, Montferrat. I respect your opinion.”

He nodded, swallowing nervously. “We’ve been assigned to hunt down Kenobi and Tano, the last remaining Jedi that played a part in the destruction of the Death Star.”

Vader nodded. “We have.”

“You don’t wish to find them…”
Vader quirked his helmet. “Don’t I?” He crossed his arms across his chest. “It is my mission from the Emperor.”

Montferrat nodded. “That is true. But you got that girl out of here as quickly as you could before the Emperor arrived.” He gestured to Vader. “She took your TIE...after you destroyed the tracking beacon. You don’t wish for the Emperor to know about her. The girl with the laser sword. The lightsaber.”

Vader was on high alert. He wouldn’t admit to anything. Not verbally at least. He waited for Montferrat to continue.

“She is with Kenobi, isn’t she?”

Still Vader refused to confirm or deny.

“I am not...entirely sure what is going on, my Lord. But it...it appears that you care greatly for the girl. That her safety is paramount.” Montferrat continued. “I may have an idea…”

Vader quirked his helmet. He gestured for his commander to continue.

Montferrat nodded. He took a deep breath. “I am loyal to the Empire, yes. But...I can admit that that loyalty has been shaken.” He swallowed nervously. “I had a wife and child hiding on Alderaan. I made a deal with...someone...to hide them there. To protect my family from the evils within the Empire.”

Vader blinked. He had no idea.

“I...I am ashamed that the Empire that I gave my life to, decided to obliterate that world. That they decided to kill my family.” Montferrat looked down at the floor. “I agree with you that the Death Star was an abomination. I agree that it was unnecessary to govern the Galaxy. One cannot govern solely with fear. It will never last.” He gestured to Vader. “This is why your officers here are loyal to you. Yes, some fear you. I’m not denying that. But a lot are loyal because you are the one usually leading the troopers into battle. You put yourself on the frontlines more so than anyone else. Certainly more often than the Emperor.”
He sighed. “What I am trying to say, Lord Vader, is that whatever you decide...your soldiers will follow you. I will follow you.”

Vader gave him a curt nod. “I believe I have an idea of where the Rebels are located. Nothing specific. Not an actual location, but I believe I know the types of places they are setting up in.”

Montferrat nodded. “Old bases. Strategically, it would make the most sense.” He frowned. “What if we began searching random bases? Ones that are still being used by the Empire — abet smaller factions. But also abandoned ones, without any strategic resources. I assume they need food. Supplies. What if we searched the ones that are likely to not have these resources?”

Vader nodded slowly. “That can be done.”

Montferrat nodded, hesitating. “I should also inform you that the Emperor has commissioned other Destroyers to begin searching for the Rebels. I’ve heard it involves probe droids for the most part.”

Vader quirked his head. “Do we have probe droids?”

His commander shook his head. “No, my Lord. We were one of the few squadrons that were not given them.”

Vader frowned. The Emperor didn’t trust him. He was keeping him in the dark on purpose. He was setting him up for failure.

*Shit.*

Vader shook his head. There was nothing he could do about it now. “Prepare the pilots for travel to an older base. Small. Forgotten about. Your choice. We can start there for now and then play it by ear.” He hesitated. “I am unsure if you are able to...but if you can, I’d like it if you could keep in contact with some of the commanders of the other Destroyers participating in the search. I’d like to know what they are doing. I’d like to check the locations they are searching.”

Montferrat nodded. “Of course, Lord Vader.”
Vader left the room, allowing Montferrat to set the course for his Destroyer.

~ | ~

Three weeks.

Three weeks of traveling to the locations the other Destroyers informed Vader’s commander about. He was told that was where they were.

Not a single Destroyer was found at any of the locations.

Not one.

Vader was being played by the Emperor. He knew it. And he was certain Montferrat knew it as well.

His soldiers were beginning to radiate anxiousness. They realized something was very, very wrong.

Vader was a dead man walking.

Fuck.

“My Lord,” Montferrat stood next to him in the command center. “What do we do?”

What does he do? It was a question he’d been asking himself since he found out about the probe droids.

He didn’t know.

Disappear. His gut was telling him to disappear. To hide. To figure this out.
Whatever this was.

Sidious had figured out something. Figured out that Vader was hiding something. He knew far more than Vader realized.

But how?

He didn’t learn it from slipping into Vader’s mind. Vader knew that for certain. He must’ve learned something from somewhere else.

_Cameras._

Vader blinked.

He blinked again. What had Sidious seen?

He turned to face Montferrat. “You wiped the past six months off of the cameras of this ship?”

Montferrat nodded. “I did, my Lord. I checked them myself.”

Vader quirked his head. He didn’t do that at Mustafar. At his fortress. Didn’t realize he needed to. The Emperor had allowed Vader free reign on Mustafar for years.

But his guards were there alone for weeks without Vader to watch them. Months even. He even told Rey they were the Emperor’s eyes.

He was an idiot.

_Arrogant. Foolish. Idiotic. Scum._
The Emperor was watching Rey the entire time she was there. Watching how she reacted to the Sith Temple below her. Watched as she got more and more angry.

The Emperor watched as she voiced to Vader how much she hated the leaders of the rebellion. He watched as she voiced to Vader how much she had been hurt by his children. How much she had been hurt by the New Republic.

Rey.

“He was watching Mustafar,” Vader voiced quietly to his commander. He could feel the shock radiate off of him.

“Lord Vader...that girl is in grave danger.”

Vader nodded in agreement. He fled the command center and made his way up to his quarters. He needed to warn Kenobi.

~ | ~

Rey sat at a table in the mess hall, munching on an early breakfast. Ration slop that surprisingly tasted delicious if you ignored the texture. She swallowed the last of her goo, before standing up from her seat and carrying her tray to the clean-up station. Nodding at the young man on cleaning rotation.

She left the mess hall and headed towards the command center. She was invited by Mothma to the morning meeting that would begin in twenty minutes or so. The rebellion had finally received the statistics about the battle above Alderaan. It would be a difficult meeting to attend, but Rey assured her she’d be there.

She exhaled slowly as she stepped into the room. Obi-Wan nodded at her in greeting. He was in the middle of a conversation with Draven off to the side of the room. Ahsoka was sitting next to Luke, chattering away about her time as Anakin Skywalker’s Padawan.

Rey grinned as Luke burst out laughing at something Ahsoka told him, taking a seat next to him. “Good morning, Luke.”
Luke wiped the tears from his eyes, before responding. “Good morning, Rey.”

The room began to quiet down as Mothma and the Organa’s — minus Leia — entered into the command center. The three were given a spot at the table.

Mothma checked the time on the wall, before nodding at Kenobi.

He waved his hand at the doorway. The door sliding shut as a result.

The meeting had begun.

“Good morning everyone,” Mothma chimed to the room. “We have a fair number of items we need to go over today, so it is going to be an action-packed meeting from beginning to end.” She sighed, bringing up a report on her datapad. “Firstly, our recruitment video was a hit. Our off-Base members are reporting quite a bit of interest. That being said, because we made the video viewable on Imperial Run channels, it is likely that a fair number of the interested parties are potential spies. We will however, begin to work with some of these individuals anyway. They will not know the location of our base of operations at all. Perhaps we will be surprised by their loyalties. Who knows?” She shrugged.

“Drawing from that...our resident Force users,” Mothma gestured to Obi-Wan and Ahsoka. “Have bounties on their heads. Not surprising, we knew that would happen.”

“How high?”

Mothma winced. “Quite high. Twenty-five for Kenobi and twenty for Ahsoka for destroying the Death Star.”

Rey watched as Obi-Wan frowned. “They’ve raised mine ten. It was fifteen since implementation of the Galactic Empire. The Emperor had to raise it up to make a point.”

Rey could feel the worry radiating off of Luke. She and Ahsoka grasped his hands to calm him down. “He knew what would happen Luke,” Rey whispered in his ear. “Besides...most of the time those bounties don’t amount to anything. They aren’t death sentences. He just has to be more
careful when he’s out and about. It is nothing new for him. I promise.” She thought of the one in her time for Luke. Thirty million credits. For General Organa, seventeen million for leading the Resistance. It had just been made public when Rey left for Ahch-To. It was a risk they had to take. It was a risk they understood.

Luke nodded. His worry beginning to lessen just a bit.

Ahsoka let go of Luke’s hand and gestured at Obi-Wan. “I’m annoyed that your bounty is higher than mine. You know how hard I worked to make that shot.” She shook her head, mockingly at the Jedi Knight across the room.

“I must’ve angered the Emperor more than you,” Obi-Wan grinned at Ahsoka. “He should’ve remembered to change the password in the observatory.”

“The fact that you still remember that particular password, on that forgotten about computer, is alarming,” Ahsoka chided back at him.

The room chuckled quietly.

The chancellor cleared her throat. “The second thing we must discuss comes from one of Draven’s informants.” She gestured to the Intelligence General to take over the conversation.

He nodded, looking around the room. “I’ve been informed that the Imperial Navy is carrying out searches for our base. Probe droids are being used.”

A man Rey didn’t know frowned at Draven. “Who told you this?”

Draven sighed. “An individual who is high up in the pecking order of a Star Destroyer. One of the many about to carry out their orders.” He hesitated, before continuing. “The Destroyer this individual is on is apparently the only one assigned that does not have probe droids aiding them in their search.”

“Why wouldn’t they have access to the probe droids as well?” Bail Organa asked quietly. “I highly doubt the Empire is that short on supplies.”
Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “Our contact comes from within the Devastator...Vader’s Destroyer. It is likely that the Emperor is setting his apprentice up for failure due to his inability to prevent the Death Star from being destroyed.”

Rey’s eyes grew wide. Was it Vader letting them know...or someone else? Perhaps the man that erased the surveillance videos of the ship...


Rey quirked her head at him, spotting his shock that he voiced it out loud. “To have a reason to kill him, Luke. Palpatine has tried it before in the past. The majority of the inquisitors that were around were there to not only hunt for the remaining Jedi, but to defeat Vader and take over as an apprentice to the Emperor. There are no longer any inquisitors left, which illustrates just how successful they were at overthrowing Vader.”

He gave Rey a shaky nod.

The room hummed at the information Rey told Luke.

“Are we certain that this informant has accurate information then?” Bail gestured. “They don’t have the same tools as everyone else on the same assignment.”

Draven sighed. “Yes, I am certain. I cannot say more than that, unfortunately.”

Bail nodded in understanding.

“While this information is not exactly surprising, we must be alert for any potential droids scoping the base.” Mothma finished. “We will need to flee here sooner rather than later. We are taking a risk staying here as long as we have. I recommend that we have our bags packed and be ready to leave at a moments notice.”

“Do we have an idea of where we are going next?” Rey asked Mothma.

She hesitated. “We do...or did. I can’t be sure if they will be possible locations that the Empire will
Rey nodded. “Perhaps Obi-Wan and I can help.”

Mon nodded at Rey. Relief evident on her face. “That is something we can discuss after the meeting.”

Rey gave the chancellor a small smile.

“Up next is the battle of Alderaan.” Mothma continued sadly. “From my understanding the population of Alderaan was just under two billion individuals.”

Breha Organa nodded. “Officially, yes. We also took in a fair number of refugees without the knowledge of the Empire. Our population was just above two billion if we include them along with our citizens. We had approximately one million refugees there unofficially.” She cleared her throat. “I am aware that there were likely a number of individuals off world at the time. We do not have a number available as to how many are...alive still. I believe only thousands.”

Rey blinked. Sixty thousand. That was the number that remained in her time. The number that settled New Alderaan after the fall of the Empire. She caught Obi-Wan’s eye from across the room and mouthed that number to him.

He closed his eyes and nodded sadly at Rey. Acknowledging what she told him.

Mon stepped over to the holo in the middle of the room and turned it on. The occupants attention was now on a hologram of the Death Star. “We finally have the statistics for the Death Star as well. It took us a bit to get the information. But we have it.” She smiled at the room. “I am pleased to say that we were able to wipe out a dangerous battle station that housed just over one million Imperial soldiers. The galaxy is far safer because of our success. Thank you Luke...well...Ahsoka I suppose.” Mothma gave the two of them a smile. A few others in the room cheered.

Rey was no longer listening. Entirely focused on Luke. He was looking blankly at the floor. Pale. Sick-looking.

One million people.
Rey thought of the message Vader wanted her to tell his son. She understood now what he knew about his boy, without ever having met him before. It was hitting him hard. The number of people he killed. The destruction he caused. The death by his hand.

“I think this is a good place to stop the meeting, chancellor,” Rey interrupted Mothma’s continued reading of the statistics she had received about the Death Star. She held on tightly to Luke’s hand and gave it a squeeze.

Mothma stopped her reading and frowned at Rey before noticing the sick-looking Luke sitting next to her. She gave her a nod. “Yes. We can discuss this and the plans for the second Death Star at a later date.” She looked around the room. “The meeting is now finished.”

Rey ignored the individuals leaving the room. She didn’t know what to do to get him to feel better. Tell him. “Luke...Luke.” She squeezed his hand. She needed him to acknowledge her before she continued.


“I’m going to tell you something my Master said to me before I left to come here.” Well aware of the people still in the room, dawdling as they made to leave. Luke looked up at Rey. “I need you to listen closely. Can you do that for me?”

Luke gave her jerky nod of his head.

“He wanted me to tell you something,” Rey started. “Said it was important that you understood. That you listened.” Luke nodded once more, indicating she could continue. Rey took a deep breath. “He wanted me to remind you that you are a person. Your name is Luke Skywalker. That you are no one’s weapon.”

Luke broke down and hid his face behind his hands.

Ahsoka pulled him in for a hug just as Obi-Wan arrived.

“He said that if you didn’t want to fight, that it was okay. That it was your choice and no one
“You don’t have to do anything like that again, Luke,” Ahsoka murmured in his ear. “I’ll do it. I’ve been a soldier for longer than you’ve been alive.”

Luke nodded. His face still hidden behind his hands.

“I’m sorry, Luke. I didn’t realize…” Obi-Wan pulled up a chair and sat down.

Luke nodded once more. “It’s okay. It just hit me all of a sudden.”

Obi-Wan hummed in understanding. “Your shields are beginning to slip. Do you think you can repair them?”


The other Force sensitives waited for Luke to say he fixed them up.

Rey could feel frustration humming around Luke. He couldn’t do it. He was far too emotional. She thought back to her second day on Vader’s Star Destroyer. His advice as he helped her rebuild her walls that he destroyed. “Luke...what are you using for walls?”

“What?”

“The material...what material?” Rey was curious. He grew up on a desert planet like Rey.

Luke sniffed. “The material that walls are made out of.” A pause. “I can’t get them to stay up. They keep crumbling.”

“Luke...sand walls are weak. A bit of water and they crumble.” Rey told him quietly. Obi-Wan looked at Rey with huge eyes. He missed that. “I needed to build my walls with durasteel. My home as a child was a tipped over AT-AT Walker. I used the walls from that to construct my shields.”
“How about you focus on your x-wing, Luke,” Obi-Wan suggested quietly. “Your cockpit...and how it protects you from outside. Or even the base here. Its walls are strong.”

Luke nodded. Soon Rey could feel his emotions get tucked away neatly behind his shields. He blinked open his eyes.

Rey breathed a sigh of relief. Ahsoka wiped a tear from her cheek before Luke could notice. She mouthed her thanks to Rey as Luke pulled away from her.

Obi-Wan held onto Luke’s arm. “Luke...how about we walk back to your sleeping quarters. You’ve just got off your night rotation. You need some rest. We can practise with Rey later today, or even tomorrow.”

Luke nodded and stood up from his seat. Obi-Wan guided him out of the room.

Mon sat by herself at the table. Her hand hiding her mouth. Shocked at what she witnessed. “I didn’t realize…” she frowned at herself. “I forgot that he is not a soldier. That he is not much more than a child.”

Rey gave Mon a tired smile. “I think we all did. From what I know...he was quite sheltered by Owen and Beru Lars...even though he grew up on Tatooine.” She frowned. “He was a farm boy before he fled here with Obi-Wan.”

Ahsoka sniffed. “Did Vader — Anakin — really say that?”

Rey nodded. “As he was buckling me into the seat of his TIE Advanced.”

“He wants Luke to think for himself.” Ahsoka said quietly. “He made sure I did the same when I was his Padawan.”

The three women waited for Obi-Wan to return. The command center empty save for them. Mothma shook her head at herself and switched off the hologram of the Death Star.
Obi-Wan made his way back into the room, shutting the door behind himself. “Luke is sleeping.”

Rey nodded. “Did you suggest that he sleep?” She raised a brow at him.

He grimaced. “A bit yes. Not too powerfully. He’s exhausted already. A simple suggestion was more than enough.”

Rey nodded. She turned her attention to Mothma. “Where are you thinking of setting up base?”

Mon sighed. “We had two possible locations: Hoth or possibly Crait.”

Rey nodded slowly. “Hoth was found out three years from now by probe droids from Vader’s Death Squadron. The Rebel Alliance lost a lot of people.” She grimaced. “It’s bloody cold there, I heard.”

“Would Vader do that this time?” Mon asked quietly. “He doesn’t have probe droids this time.”

“True...but the other Destroyers do. There are numerous Destroyers that are constantly teamed up with Vader on attacks. His Devastator is just one ship. And I think today, it is probably the only one he actually has any control over. Especially if the Emperor is providing the others with droids.” Rey looked to Obi-Wan. “Who is Draven’s source? Do you know?”

Obi-Wan looked to the table. “The current commander of the ship. He helped him out once or twice. Hid his family from the Emperor. They were two of the unregistered refugees on Alderaan.”

Rey frowned. Her mind thinking back to the man who saw her off. “He helped wipe the security cameras of the Destroyer as Vader got me out of there. He helped protect me from the Emperor. He’s loyal to Vader.”

“Shit.” This was completely
different than before.

Obi-Wan set his elbows on the table and held his head in his hands. “I think the Emperor knows far more than we think he does. Than Anakin thinks he does.” He looked to Rey.

She nodded in agreement. She was terrified. “We have to tell him.” Her lip quivered. “Please.”

“We have no way of contacting him,” Mothma said quietly. “And if I’m being honest...I am not entirely sure I want to. You may trust him. But no one else here will.”

Rey looked to Obi-Wan who grimaced.

He reached into the pocket of his tunic and pulled out the datapad. He set it on the table in front of himself.

“For how long have you had that?” Mon asked him quietly.

“I gave it to him on our way to Malachor.” Rey paused. “Only a few weeks.”

“And you've been feeding Vader information?” Her tone was deathly calm.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “I informed him that Rey was safe. Thanked him for the second Death Star plans. He had written documents about Rey’s training. Questions he had about a bond that the two of them share. I gave him my thoughts. Told him I didn’t know. That I didn't have access to information to find out more about bonds.” He looked to the chancellor. “Nothing else, I swear.”

Mon nodded. “I thought we agreed to tell each other everything. No secrets.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “We did.”

“Then why would you keep something like this from me?” Mon was upset.
Rey could feel her sadness saturating the room. Her grief.

“He was my Padawan,” Obi-Wan said quietly.

“He murdered my confidante in cold blood while you were...stars knows where.” Mon pointed a finger at Obi-Wan. “Mace was thrown out the window of Palpatine’s office. I watched him drop past my floor. I watched him land on the walkway below.” She shook her head at the Jedi Knight before her. “He killed my best friend.” She sniffed. “His actions killed Padmé. He slaughtered the younglings at the Temple. He led the clone army to wipe out every last soul at the Temple.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I know.”

Mon swiped a stray tear from her cheek and snatched the datapad from Obi-Wan. “And you still believe we can trust him, don’t you?” She sighed as Obi-Wan nodded. “I’ll send him a message. Tell him where to meet.” She glared at the occupants at the table. “You are lucky I hate the Emperor far more than I hate Vader.” She began pounding on the keyboard. “You pull a stunt like this again, and the lot of you are out of here.” She saved the document and shut the datapad screen off. “No secrets. At all. Not from me.”

Rey looked at Mothma cautiously. Afraid to upset her even more. “I’m sorry that my being here led to this. These secrets.”

The chancellor looked at Rey. Shaking her head. “I understand why you wouldn’t trust me, Rey. I don’t hold it against you at all. If I was in your position I probably would’ve done the same. What upsets me is Obi-Wan keeping secrets from me.” She looked to Kenobi. “We made a promise to each other. When he arrived here. We promised that we’d work together to figure this all out.” She gestured to Rey. “We promised we’d help each other.”

“I’m sorry.” Obi-Wan said tiredly.

The datapad chimed. Mon reached for it. “Good...you should be sorry.”

She flicked it on and read the message. Nodding once she finished. “He said he’d be open to meet with myself, Obi-Wan, and Rey. I told him Crait in two standard days time. He’d like Ahsoka to stay here with his children...to protect them...says he doesn’t know where the other Destroyers are searching. That his crew is being left in the dark...that they’re being fed false locations of where searches are being carried out.”
Chapter 14

Rey sat alone on the bench seat of the modified transport vessel that she and Obi-Wan had used to pick Ahsoka up on Malachor. This time, however, they were traveling with Mothma to Crait.

She was nervous. Unsure.

Something was terribly wrong if Vader felt the need to meet with the chancellor of the Rebellion in person. Rey knew it. Kenobi knew it. Mothma knew it. There was something he couldn’t say over the datapad. Something he didn’t want to say.

Rey curled her arms around herself, trying desperately to remain calm. She couldn’t lose her shields now. She needed to remain strong. Focused.

She rubbed her face. Frustrated for continuing to remain anxious. Sighing she made her way back into the cockpit. Back to Obi-Wan and Mothma.

Rey plopped down on the jump seat. Elbows on her knees and her head in her hands. She sighed once more. Her stomach was beginning to hurt from the anxiety.

“What’s wrong?” Obi-Wan’s voice drew her attention to the other occupants of the ship.

Rey frowned. “My anxiety...can’t you feel it?” She clutched her stomach. “My stomach is killing me.”

Obi-Wan quirked his head at Rey. “All I can sense from you is...annoyance and frustration perhaps. Not anxiety.” He rubbed his beard in thought. “Anakin used to get anxious quite often...perhaps you’re picking up on his emotions?”

Rey grimaced. Would he be turning up in front of her shortly? She highly doubted that’d go over well with the chancellor of the rebellion.

“Is that thing Rey’s feeling...is that what a Master-Padawan — training bond — is like?” Mothma asked quietly. “Mace mentioned them to me once.”
Rey went to answer her, as did Obi-Wan, when the sound began to mute around Rey. Her ears felt like they were clogged with water. Everything was muffled. She scrunched her eyes shut. She couldn’t afford this right now.

Mechanized breathing filled her ears.

Rey blinked open her eyes.

Vader was sitting perpendicular to her. Close. Hands extended in front of him. Focused on his task. He was flying a ship.

Rey made a noise to get Vader’s attention.

His helmet and upper half of his body turned in her direction. “Rey!”

Rey winced. Surely Kenobi and Mothma heard that? She looked at the two of them watching her in their seats. Mothma was saying something to her. Something about indigestion. Oblivious to Vader now in the cockpit with them.

Rey met Obi-Wan’s eyes. His grew in understanding. He shook his head. He couldn’t see or hear Vader sitting behind them.

“You’re not alone,” Vader said to her quieter.

Rey carefully shook her head. Making eye contact with Vader, whose attention was entirely on her. “No. This isn’t indigestion. It’s just a stomach ache from anxiety.”

Vader quirked his head. “My anxiety.” He nodded in understanding. “I apologize...but I don’t think I can keep my anxiety hidden from you. I am hiding it as much as I can Rey.”

She nodded.
Out of the corner of her eye she saw Mothma frown. Obi-Wan gestured to her to face the front of the ship. To give Rey some privacy.

“I am coming from Mustafar. Someone was watching the security feed Rey.” Vader continued quietly. He started looking around the room. Trying to ascertain if he could see anyone else. “Someone from Coruscant.”

Rey hid her mouth behind her hands. *Palpatine*.

Vader nodded. “I believe so. He had access to the video feed...all of it. I believe he was either watching it as it happened, or began viewing it afterwards. He saw you slowly begin to break down from the Sith Temple below. He saw as it affected you.” He looked down at the floor. “I am so sorry Rey. I’ve endangered you. I’ve endangered my children.”

*Future?* Rey thought hard about that word. That question.

Vader nodded. “We have to assume so...I don’t know. I don’t know if he could hear anything.” His anxiety was almost overwhelming. “I don’t know what to do. I need help. I need advice. I need to talk it out with someone.”

Rey nodded once more. She tried to comfort him using the Force. She didn’t know how he did it. She thought of ocean waves crashing. Long grass. A light rain shower.

Vader quirked his head. “Thank you. I’m sorry for overwhelming you. I need to make another hyperspace jump. I need to go Rey.”

Rey nodded in understanding. She closed her eyes as he disappeared suddenly from in front of her.

The sound came back to where Rey was. Obi-Wan was chattering away with the chancellor, asking questions about Crait.

“An old mining planet you say? How did Bail find it?”

“Well, we needed some more places to go to, potential bases for future settlements. He knew of its
location because of all the salt that was mined. A chef for the Royal Family of Alderaan told him that Crait salt was considered by some to be the best in the galaxy.” Mon hummed. “The fact that it’s a pain in the ass to get to is the only reason more people don’t know about it. The mine was abandoned years ago. They couldn’t justify the cost of travel and mining equipment maintenance for something that can be found on quite a few closer worlds.”

The ship sounded its warning that it was about to leave hyperspace. Obi-Wan reached for the controls. “Feeling better Rey?”

“Yes. Sorry about that. I was having a difficult time focusing.” Rey scratched her nose.

“How’s your stomach?” Mothma asked her quietly as the ship dropped out of hyperspace. They now needed to travel for a few minutes to reach the planet. Another twenty minutes or so of regular travel.

Rey frowned. “Not quite as bad. Still sore.”

“Perhaps when we get back to the base one of the medical droids can have a look. See if you need different vitamins. More vitamins. Rations only go so far.” Mothma gave her a small smile.

Rey nodded.

“Is everything else alright though?” Kenobi asked as he flew the ship towards Crait. It was a tiny ball in front of them.

Rey grimaced. “I was thinking...what if Palpatine somehow found out about me? About Luke and Leia? About me being from the future?”

Obi-Wan quirked his head. “I’m listening.”

“Well...I was on Mustafar for almost two weeks alone. But there were security cameras everywhere. Vader and I were able to watch Snoke make his way through the fortress almost entirely.” Rey paused. She took a breath. “What if he was watching me the entire time I was there? What if he was somehow able to listen in as Vader and I spoke of Ahsoka and Luke and Leia?”
“Then I would say that Vader is in grave danger,” Mothma said quietly. “Palpatine would know that Vader has no intention to bring Luke to him. That he is training you as his apprentice...or Padawan, I suppose.”

“He thinks Anakin will make a move to overthrow him. That’s why he is leaving him in the dark.” Obi-Wan sighed. “Not to mention his children. The possibility of them standing beside their father.” He shook his head. “Palpatine has to assume his apprentice has chosen his family over him. Over the Empire.” He exhaled deeply. “I would think that if he knew you are from the future, then his goal is to find you Rey. He will want to use you to keep his Empire from collapsing. I don’t think he cares about Luke...or Leia, as much as you. Not anymore.”

Rey nodded. She figured that as well.

The trio made their way closer to the blinding white planet. Kenobi carefully flew the ship through its atmosphere, closer to the base below. Setting the ship on the surface of the planet directly in front of hangar doors, he began shutting down the vessel.

“And now we wait,” Mothma said quietly.

“I don’t think he’s too far away,” Rey informed her. She was pretty sure he was on the second hyperspace jump. That particular one only lasted for a few minutes before exiting to arrive near Crait.

Rey sat in silence. Her mind whirring at the potential shitstorm they were all about to experience. She was a liability. A threat to the Rebellion. She frowned. “I mentioned Jakku when I was on Mustafar.”

Obi-Wan was intrigued. Mon hummed.

“Perhaps we need to go check it out. Send some scouts to see what could be there.”

Rey closed her eyes and sighed. Vader had just exited hyperspace. He’d arrive in minutes. “We can discuss it with Vader when he gets here. Should only be a few more minutes...he’s just exited hyperspace.” She looked to Kenobi. “He’ll break atmosphere in a couple of minutes.”

He nodded at her and stood up from his seat. She and Mothma followed him to the rear of the ship.
The three of them exited their vessel to watch for the arriving Sith Lord.

A few minutes of Rey looking off in the distance before she was able to spot a small, dark speck. Getting larger and larger the longer she looked at it.

Vader had a new TIE Fighter. Rey grinned to herself. He probably had a few on hand on his Star Destroyer just in case one of them got damaged.

The TIE lowered to the surface twenty or so feet from them. The salt on the surface of the planet was beginning to cloud around his ship as he shut down its engines.

*This stuff was worse than sand,* Rey thought dryly to herself.

Amusement from Vader as he popped the door open and dropped down to the surface.

Rey blinked. This bond they shared was growing stronger by the day. That or she wasn’t used to being around him anymore. His emotions. Thoughts. So incredibly easy for Rey to pick up on. Hers easy for him.

Vader quirked his helmet as he came to a stop in front of the three rebels. “Chancellor,” he acknowledged Mothma first.

“Lord Vader...it’s been a while.” Tense. Uncertainty was radiating off of the chancellor. She really didn’t like him.

“It has,” Vader agreed. He turned his focus to Obi-Wan. “Kenobi.”

Obi-Wan was also cautious. His arms were crossed. “Anakin,” he nodded to his former Padawan.

Vader was already looking at Rey. Making sure she was alright. Making sure she didn’t have any injuries. Making sure the Rebels were treating his Padawan well.

Rey smiled at her Master. “Master Vader...I’ve missed you,” she told him quietly as she stepped in for a hug. No longer caring what anyone else thought. Surprise hummed around the two of them as Vader held her close. The side of her face pressed up snuggly against his shoulder armour. She breathed a sigh of relief. He was alive. In front of her. She could feel his anxiety, as well as her own, slowly begin to lessen. “Are you hurt?” She didn’t know exactly what Palpatine put him through. Whatever it was, he protected her from experiencing it.

She pulled out of his hug. His hand still on her shoulder.

He shook his head. “Not any more than usual. I was able to reach my bacta in time.”

Rey nodded. “We can catch up inside our ship. There is room to sit and have a discussion.”

She turned her attention to the other two standing nearby. Mothma was obviously shocked. Her politician training long forgotten. Obi-Wan was calmer. He was looking between the two of them, rubbing his beard. Intrigued.

Rey grasped Vader’s hand. “I guess I’ll lead the way.” She pulled him up the ramp and into their vessel. His steps sounding heavy. She felt so much calmer with Vader here. Like anything was possible. Like they’d be able to figure it all out over a short discussion.

She sighed as she took her seat. Gesturing to Vader to take a spot on the bench seat next to her. It was sturdier than one of the other chairs.

Obi-Wan and Mothma arrived after them. The chancellor’s face once more schooled from the emotions running rampant through her. She appeared to be calm and collected once more. She took the seat facing Vader directly. Obi-Wan took the remaining chair that was facing the rear of the ship. Alert for any unwanted visitors.

Mothma sighed before clearing her throat. “You mentioned the other day that you were getting left in the dark about where everyone else was searching. Can you tell me the locations of the places the other commanders told you?”

“The moons of Naboo. Dantooine. Tatooine. We haven’t heard anything from anyone for about a week.” Vader squeezed Rey’s hand.
Mothma nodded. “Dantooine was an older base. We left there some time ago.”

Vader scratched his leg with his free hand. “I know. I arrived shortly after you fled.”

Rey could see as Mothma swallowed. Tense. Angry. Barely hanging on.

“I think what is more important is the fact that the Emperor knows about Rey. And likely knows about both of my children.”

Rey hummed. “We also have to assume that he is aware of us knowing about Jakku. If he was listening in — if he was actually able to — he would’ve heard me mention where I grew up.”

Vader nodded. “We must storm it then...the research facility there in Carbon Ridge.” He quirked his head at Rey. “There is also the observatory there, Obi-Wan said in his note that you mentioned there was one there.”

Rey nodded. “I’ve never been in it. I just heard about it from other, older scavengers. They said that it was completely trashed. That they couldn’t even get the power going again to see anything. It was a ways out from everything. Far too risky a trip for me to check it out. I do know where it is though...in a general sense.”


“Do you honestly expect the rebellion to help you Lord Vader?” Mothma was angry. Annoyed at both Rey and Obi-Wan. “I see no reason for us to.”

Vader quirked his helmet. Entirely focused on the rebel leader in front of him. “On the contrary, Chancellor. I believe the observatory has information vital for the survival of your Republic that you are so keen on implementing.”

Mothma frowned. “Go on.”
Vader squeezed Rey’s hand once more. He didn’t like being ordered around. “The Empire made its last stand above Jakku before the rebellion was able to overpower them and take control. It is likely that the observatory housed a map of the Unknown Regions. A map that allowed the survivors of the Galactic Empire to come together, rebuild, and finally slaughter your hard-earned, rebuilt senate in the Hosnian system some thirty years later.”

“And how do you suppose we get that information from there?” Mon shook her head. “We can’t just walk through the front door and ask for a copy of the supposed map.”

“You can’t.” Rey could feel Vader’s grin underneath his mask. “But...I can. My troopers can.”

“That is an extremely high risk though, Anakin,” Obi-Wan chimed in quietly. “Palpatine could change the contingency plan if he were to find out about it. Then we would have no idea where to search.”

Vader’s disappointment hummed. “That is true.”

“Now...I’m not ruling out storming Jakku...I just think we need to wait a bit longer. See what Palpatine does with the knowledge of Rey. See if he knows she is actually from the future.” Obi-Wan suggested. “When we do it, we will likely need two teams at the same time — at Carbon Ridge and at the Plateau.” He frowned. “Rey’s story of the Imperial research base, to me, sounds like a possible Sith holocron. Like it infected Plutt’s crew. They probably touched it and then took each other out.”

Vader nodded. “It’s likely. But I know that they are researching something there. I saw something on the Death Star. I’m not sure I entirely understand it. What it means…” he squeezed Rey’s hand.

“What did you see?” Rey was curious.


Rey felt her stomach start to churn. She felt uneasy. Like she did when Tuanul was brought up in conversations on Jakku. Dangerous.

She shook her head. Ignoring the curiosity humming strongly from Vader. He felt her unease.
“What do we do with me. With Luke and Leia?”

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “Make sure all of you are under strict protection at all times.”

Vader nodded in agreement. “No missions without Ahsoka or Obi-Wan with any of you. You are all barely trained anyway. You and Luke need to focus on your training. Leia needs to make sure her shields remain strong.”

Obi-Wan nodded.

“I agree with Lord Vader,” Mothma chimed in. “Luke is not a soldier. Leia being on the Tantive IV was a great risk. Too great.”


Rey shook her head. “Exactly what you said would happen. He broke down when he learned just how many people he killed. I was able to talk to him though. I told him what you said.”

He nodded in understanding. “Have you had a look at the plans I gave you?”

“Our engineers have,” Mothma answered him. “We have yet to discuss it in a meeting, but we will be shortly. Our engineers have spotted a similar flaw to the first Death Star. Which will likely be corrected now that the Empire is aware of it.”

Rey nodded. “In my time...it wasn’t complete when it was destroyed. Ships were able to fly right in and fire at the reactor core. The laser was fully operational...as was a shield generator. The majority of the battle station was built after the laser was installed.”

“Where?” Vader asked her. “I can keep my ears open. See if I can learn something from any of the chatter.”

Rey looked at Mothma. Silently asking permission.
She got a nod.

“It was orbiting around Endor. The location was leaked on purpose to wipe out the rebellion.”

“Arrogance at its finest,” Vader chimed in.

Mothma chuckled. “Dictatorships never seem to learn.”

Vader shook his head. “You said that was four years from now. What happened between now and then?”

Rey hesitated. “A lot.” She grimaced. “Rebels did some stuff. You were hunting down Luke to get him to side with you. To side with the Emperor. He trained with Yoda...and Force ghost Obi-Wan. I think you had bounty hunters helping with your search.” She looked at Vader. “I was told that a person by the name of Boba Fett was involved.”

Obi-Wan groaned. “I knew that would happen.” At Rey’s confusion he explained. “Mace Windu killed his father.”

Vader nodded. “Sliced his head right off.”

Mothma frowned. Unimpressed with Vader’s commentary.

He quirked his head at the chancellor again. “I’ve upset you. Tell me why, so I can attempt to correct it.”

She sniffed. Glaring at Vader. “You killed Mace.”

Vader leaned back against the wall of the ship. Shocked. He shook his head. “No. I disarmed him. He wanted to kill Palpatine. I insisted that he arrest him. I believed I needed the Sith Lord alive to save Padmé. He refused to listen. He was standing above Palpatine who was sprawled on the floor, shooting Force lightning at him. I...sliced his hand off. Disarmed him. Palpatine pushed him out of the window of his office. He fell to his death. I was then renamed by Palpatine in his office, and taken on as his apprentice.” He looked down at his lap. “I’m sorry for my actions. I realize they
led to his….demise. His death.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “What he says is true Mon. The Force insists. I saw part of the security footage. I saw him kneeling before Palpatine.”

Mothma wiped at a tear. She gave him a jerky nod.

“You two were close.” A statement not a question.

Mothma nodded once more. Not wanting to say anything more.

Rey could feel Vader’s confusion. She squeezed his hand. *Confidante.*

Shame wafted around Rey. Vader heard her thoughts loud and clear.

Rey tried to think of something else to tell them to move the conversation along. “You got a fancy new ship. The *Executor* — a Star Dreadnought.” At Mon’s wave of confusion she clarified. “A Super Star Destroyer.”

Vader shook his head. “I won’t this time. I no longer have command of the squadron carrying out the search for the Rebels. I don’t even have probe droids.”

Rey nodded. Another change she needed to note. “You got your daughter and your future son-in-law captured. Used them as bait to get to Luke. You informed him you were his father after you sliced off his hand. It’s where he lost the lightsaber. It somehow ended up on Takodana over thirty years later.” She patted her hip.

Obi-Wan hummed. “When did all of this happen though? Right after the first Death Star?”

Rey’s eyes grew. She shook her head. “I believe it was a few years later.”

“What happened between now and then?” Mon asked Rey. Curiosity brimming. She nodded at Rey, informing her she could say it in front of Vader.
“Cymoon 1 — the rebellion learned that the Empire was making a deal with Jabba the Hutt.”

Vader’s surprise hummed against Rey. “The largest Imperial weapons manufacturing plant is there.”

Rey nodded. “I know. The Empire has slaves that keep it running nonstop.”

Vader shook his head. “The Empire doesn’t employ slaves.”

Rey raised a brow. “Did Palpatine tell you that?” She shook her head at him. “They weren’t human slaves...but they were still slaves.” She squeezed his hand. “They are locked up in a cage in the manufacturing plant there. Luke set them all free before the plant was destroyed. I suppose technically they died free…”

Vader looked down at his lap. Ashamed. Uncertain. “When did this happen?”

“A few weeks...maybe a couple of months after the Death Star. Around now, I suppose. I don’t know the exact dates.” Rey informed him quietly. She didn’t realize Vader was unaware of the Empire’s use of slave labour. “I guess the Emperor sent a negotiator to speak with Jabba the Hutt’s representatives. That negotiator turned out to be you, and the representatives turned out to be Rebels trying to get information. Trying to destroy the facility. Explosions happened.”

“I am uncertain if I will be sent there by Sidious this time,” Vader told the Rebels quietly. “But destroying that facility is likely vital for your success.”

Mothma hummed. “I agree.” She scratched her arm. “If we do end up heading there, Luke will not be with that group.”

Vader nodded.

“What else happened, Rey?” Obi-Wan asked her.
Rey frowned. “I’m not sure. I know of Cymoon 1 and Han and Leia getting captured on Cloud City. I realize that other skirmishes happened...but I don’t know my history very well. My General didn’t tell me anything more than that.”

Vader squeezed her hand in understanding. “Perhaps the Force insisted on those incidents and so Leia focused on that.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “What happened when Han and Leia were captured? Disregarding Luke — we know what would’ve happened. Obviously it won’t once more.”

“Han was frozen in carbonite and given to Jabba the Hutt. Leia and a few others went to rescue him from Tatooine. He was frozen for some time. She got captured and was made a slave by Jabba the Hutt.” Rey grimaced. “Luke saved everyone a short time later. My General said that he did some ‘Jedi shit’ and got everyone out of there. Leia choked Jabba the Hutt to death.”

Obi-Wan hissed. “How did she choke him?”

Vader was worried as well.

Rey shook her head. “With the chain he had her attached to him with. No Force choking occurred.”

“Jedi shit?” The chancellor asked after everyone calmed down.

Rey shrugged. “Her words, not mine.”

“Sidious has suggested that I use bounty hunters to aid my search for Luke.” Vader was uneasy. “I assume it’s likely that he has already hired them. Regardless of whether or not I actually use them.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “It is likely. I think that he may also be using the bounty hunters to find Rey.”

Vader nodded in agreement. “My apprentice as far as he knows.”

Rey looked down at the floor. Frowning. “You tucked me in. Do you do that for all your
apprentices?”


“I’m asking because if we assume Palpatine was watching Mustafar, he would’ve seen that happen. I assume you didn’t tuck your apprentices in when you were training them…” Rey raised a brow at Vader.

He shook his head. “My Padawan then. He would know that you were different than the others.”

Rey nodded. “He would’ve seen the colour of my lightsaber too. Probably could identify that it used to be yours as well, I assume.”

Vader nodded. “It’s likely.”

Mothma rubbed her face. “So that means he has every reason to assume that something has shifted in you.”

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement. “He may realize, or believe that you are returning to the light side.”

Vader nodded. “I’m still not light though. I’m dark.”

Rey nodded. “I know…I saw your eyes in your fortress, remember?” She sniffed. “But at the same time, I don’t find your darkness overwhelming anymore. I’m not sure if that’s because I am used to being around you, or if you are shielding yourself extremely well, or if you aren’t quite as dark as you were when we first met.”

“I’m shielding still,” Vader told her quietly. “I don’t wish to knock you on your ass again.”

Rey smacked his arm. “How kind of you.” She held back a grin threatening to erupt on her face.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “So…Rey, Luke, and Leia no longer will take part in missions, unless
absolutely necessary. Luke and Rey will focus on their training. They’ll need it sooner rather than later, I assume.”

Vader nodded.

“I can convince Bail and Breha that Leia needs to learn how...rebellions are run. She can sit in on meetings. Shadow myself,” Mothma suggested. “It keeps her out of missions, which is something they both wanted. But still allows her to know what is going on — which is something she wanted.”

The others nodded in agreement.

“I still need to visit...Yoda.” Obi-Wan grimaced to himself. “I haven’t had any contact with him for a few years. He is probably waiting for me to come to him.” He sighed, rubbing his face. “Should I take Rey and Luke with me when I do see him?” He waited for Vader’s input. He was respecting the role he had in both of their lives.

Rey could feel Vader’s surprise that he was even asked. The room waited for Vader to come to a decision. He gave them a jerky nod. “It wouldn’t hurt. Will Ahsoka go with you? Or will she stay with Leia?”

Obi-Wan and Rey both shook their heads. “Ahsoka will stay with Leia. She refuses to see Yoda,” Kenobi told him quietly. “He was the one who organized her mission to Malachor. He never told anyone else what was planned.” He looked down to the floor. “In Rey’s timeline Ahsoka wasn’t rescued from Malachor until just after the destruction of the second Death Star. Rey and I picked her up two weeks after she arrived on Malachor...from the portal she stepped out of. In other words, in Rey’s timeline she waited four years in the Sith Temple for someone to come.” He shook his head. “I didn’t even know she was still alive. I didn’t know that she survived the purge. Yoda never informed me.”

Rey could feel Vader’s anger humming underneath. A simmering rage he was trying to suppress. She squeezed his hand. “She’s alright Anakin. This time she is okay. She’s safe.”

“He’ll probably inform you it was the Force’s will that that happened. That she needed to be marooned in a Sith Temple for years because the Force told him so.” Vader’s venom could be heard despite the vocoder distorting his voice. He turned to Rey. “He’s probably going to tell you to stop messing with the timeline here. That you are a disturbance in the Force. Unnatural.” He gestured to her. “He may even say that there is darkness in you.” A pause. “Powerful light, but with powerful darkness. He will imply that you’re a threat. That you can’t be trusted.”
Rey shook her head. “It doesn’t matter. I know what I have to do. I know why I was sent here.” She hesitated. “Well...I believe I know why I was sent back in time. That’s good enough for me.”

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. “I spent close to twenty years on Tatooine, Anakin. I used the time to go over what went wrong. Not just with you...falling to the Darkside, but also how the Jedi Order failed. How Palpatine was able to do what he did.” He sighed. “That being said, I think it’s important we try to get as many different points of view as possible in regards to Rey coming here. Yoda may understand it better.”

Vader nodded, conceding the argument.

“We also can’t forget the likelihood of a spy in the rebellion,” Mon said quietly. “Obi-Wan mentioned that you believed there was likely one already in place…”

Vader nodded. “Or will be soon.”

“Contingency plans,” Rey chimed in. She started tugging on her braid. It was beginning to grow out. It needed to be rebraided. “Likely in a position that wouldn’t draw any attention, but allowed them to listen in on the chatter.”

“Mechanic or kitchen is where I would place one.” Vader shrugged. “People blab when they believe no one is paying them any attention. People let their guard down when they’re eating with friends. They let their guard down when they’re talking shop.”

Rey nodded in agreement.

Vader turned to look at her. “How did you explain showing up in my TIE?”

Rey grinned. “I said I stole it. That I destroyed the tracker and got away in time. I told my greeting party that you had other more pressing matters to focus on. That you could easily get a new one.”

Vader’s amusement hummed around her. “Good. I will stick with that story if I get asked.” He focused on the other two. “I should probably leave now. I shouldn’t be out of communications range from my Destroyer for too long.”
Obi-Wan nodded in agreement and stood up from his seat. The other three did the same.

Vader gestured for Rey to turn her back to him.

She complied. Grinning. She could hear him tug off his leather gloves and toss them on the bench seat.

Metal fingers brushed against her earlobe. Her Padawan braid was loosened. Gentle tugging when Vader began rebraiding her hair. “I can’t hear you.”

Rey snickered. She closed her eyes. “There is no emotion, there is peace.” More tugging. “There is no ignorance, there is knowledge.” She swallowed. “There is no passion, there is serenity.” A sigh. “There is no chaos, there is harmony.” A sharp tug, indicating Vader was finished braiding. He tied her braid off. “There is no death, there is the Force.”

Pride hummed around Rey. “Perfect.” Vader stepped back.

Rey turned around, blinking her eyes open. Vader was tugging his gloves back on. Behind him, Obi-Wan was watching the two of them with wide eyes. Emotion pouring out of him.

Mothma was looking between the three Force sensitives. A small smile on her face. She gave Rey a small wink.

Vader looked at Rey once more. “Be safe, Rey. I’m sure we will speak again soon.”

She nodded. “Same to you. Please be safe.”

A nod from him as he made his way down the ramp of their vessel. His cape billowing behind him.

Obi-Wan exhaled deeply. He cleared his throat, before giving Rey a shaky grin. He hit the button to close the ramp. And made his way back towards the cockpit.
They needed to get back to the Rebellion.
Chapter 15

Rey sat in the mess hall munching on her breakfast — today was some bread from a planet she
never heard of, with some protein — meat sausages, she was informed — plus a side of fruit.
Something called an apple.

The Millennium Falcon just returned from a supply run for the rebellion.

She sighed as she bit into the apple. It was sweet. Juicy. She hummed as she chewed. It was
delicious.

“Good?” Luke asked her from his place across from her. He was munching on his bread.

Rey nodded. “Yep. I’ve never had a fruit before. It’s very sweet. Refreshing.”

Obi-Wan smiled at her. “Fruits are my favourite.”

Beckoning them over.

Rey could feel as they came over behind her.


Chewbacca called out a greeting to Luke as well.

“I don’t think you two have met Rey yet.” Luke gestured to Rey.

Rey exhaled deeply before plastering on a grin. She had been avoiding both Han and Chewbacca.
She turned around in her seat and nodded at the both of them. “Hello. It’s nice to meet you both.”
She waved her apple around. “Thanks for the food.”
Han smirked at her. “You’re very welcome.” He hooked his thumbs in his belt loops.

Chewbacca trilled at Rey.

Rey burst out laughing. “Of course it wasn’t enough!”

Chewy, Han, and Luke were surprised. “You understand Chewy here?” Han asked Rey unbelievingly.

She nodded. “Yeah. I understand Shyriiwook and droid. I can speak a bit of Huttese as well.”

“Well...where I grew up, I needed to know how to communicate with Off-Worlders. I had access to some...educational databases that enabled me to learn a few languages. Either speaking or just understanding.” She shrugged. “It’s a necessary skill to have where I’m from.” She gave Luke a smile.

Young. He was so incredibly young to Rey. It was something she was trying to get used to with Luke and Leia as well.

Technically the twins were younger than Rey was. Nineteen. Rey was pretty sure she was twenty standard years old by this point.

Han Solo was older than Leia. Thirteen years older, was what General Organa had told her with tears in her eyes before Rey left for Ahch-To.


Rey frowned. “Well...where I grew up, I needed to know how to communicate with Off-Worlders. I had access to some...educational databases that enabled me to learn a few languages. Either speaking or just understanding.” She shrugged. “It’s a necessary skill to have where I’m from.” She gave Luke a smile.

Chewbacca sat down next to Rey and began asking her questions about herself. Happy that someone other than Han could understand him.

Rey smiled at Chewy. “I’m twenty, I think.” She nodded at something else the Wookiee asked of
her. “Jakku.”

“That wasteland?” Han sat down next to Luke and grabbed a chunk of bread off of his plate. He took a big bite before Luke could snatch it back.

Rey chuckled at Luke’s expression. “Yeah...haven’t been there in a while. It’s probably different than what I remember.”

Han hummed in understanding. “You been here long Rey?”

She shrugged. “A few weeks. Almost a month, I think.” Obi-Wan nodded as he took a sip of his caf. “Are you the pilot of that Corellian Freighter?” Rey asked him, hiding a grin. “I saw it when I arrived here. That’s not the *Millenium Falcon* is it? I heard it did the Kessel Run in fourteen parsecs.”

“Fourteen!” Han scoffed. Chewbacca growled something rude.

Rey snickered.

“Try twelve parsecs,” Han corrected arrogantly. “Less than twelve actually.” He rubbed his chin and threw Rey a grin.

Rey shook her head. A grin still evident on her face. “That’s impossible. On that freighter? You must have some modifications.”

Han smirked at her. “One or two,” he admitted. He motioned at Rey, pointing at her hip. “You a Jedi like Luke?”

Rey shook her head. “I’m just training...can’t do much, yet.”


Chewbacca asked her a question.
Rey quirked an eyebrow. “I have heard of him, but I have yet to meet him.” She looked to Obi-Wan watching the group. “Perhaps I will see him soon.”

Obi-Wan gave her a nod. “Soon, yes. Not sure when the best time to leave here is.”

Chewy asked Rey another question. She turned to look at the Wookiee with surprise. “Of course I can, Chewy! I’ll tell him you say ‘hello’, and give him your thanks.”

Chewy nodded at Rey, pleased at her response. He patted her head with a furry hand and stood up from the bench. Calling out his goodbye, he left the mess hall for some rest on the *Falcon*.

“Is Leia around?” Han asked the group after having his fill of Luke’s breakfast.

Luke nodded. “She has breakfast with her parents in their room.”

Han nodded, throwing Luke a smirk. “Sounds pleasant. Thanks for the breakfast, kid.” He stood up from the table and left the mess hall to search for the Princess of Alderaan.

“Are they...together?” Rey asked quietly once Han left the room.

Luke hesitated. “Not exactly. They bicker and fight all the time. Call each other names.” He shrugged. “But...I think that’s how the two of them flirt.” He shook his head. “I don’t know.”

“Young love,” Obi-Wan chimed in. Eyes shining in amusement.

Rey burst out laughing.

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The morning meeting was in full force. Rey sat around the table next to Ahsoka. The two of them were squished in close together, room had to be made for Leia to sit next to Mothma. The group
was chatting back and forth with each other. Sharing what they had heard from their various contacts. Chatter from both the Core and Outer Rim planets. Unhappy citizens. Displeased Imperial Officers. Individuals that heard the Rebellion’s message. Individuals wanting to join the fight.

While the members in high command were pleased at the attention the video gained, Mothma had to constantly reiterate that it was likely that the majority of the interest was coming from people working with the Empire.

“We can bring a few of them here and see if they’re informants for the Empire,” a man argued with Mothma. “I don’t understand why we aren’t allowing any new members. Even if they are spies, we can learn what they know. Feed them selective information to the Emperor.”

Mothma nodded. “And normally I would agree with you, but not today. It is far too great a risk for our members if we were to knowingly let a spy in.”

The man shook his head. “Ever since you, Kenobi, and Rey here came back from your secret mission to Crait you’ve been hesitant to do anything.” He gestured to Mon sitting across from him. “Who in the hell did you meet? What did they tell you?”

Leia was watching the chancellor closely. Keen on how she would react.

Mothma rubbed her eyes. Sighing, before taking a long drink of her caf. “As I have already informed you, the three of us met with someone in the Imperial Navy. Someone who is supposed to be actively searching for us. The fact that they let us know of the high probability of a spy here already is causing me to wait before we allow newer members to come to the base.” She looked pointedly at the individuals situated around the table. “I will not risk the lives of anyone here, for a few new mechanics or a few more cooks. If anything, our members outside the base are better situated to keep tabs on what is going on within the Empire.”

Rey watched as Leia nodded slowly in agreement.

“But can your informant be trusted though?” Bail Organa asked the Chancellor quietly. “I agree with your reasoning Mon, I’m just trying to think outside the box a bit. Could your informant be saying there is likely a spy within the rebellion in order to keep us from getting more bodies? Preventing a larger number of individuals willing to fight against the Empire?”

Mothma clasped her hands in front of her. Rey was watching her closely. Wondering what she
would say. Leia quirked her head, waiting for the response.

“I trust this individual. I trust what they have said to me. I trust their reasons for meeting with me.”
Mon looked to Rey and Obi-Wan sitting near her. “I don’t like them much. But I do trust them. They have no reason to lie to me, and every reason to tell me the truth.”

Bail nodded slowly. “They have someone here they care about. A loved one...or family member. They want to make sure they’re safe.” His eyes grew. He stole a glance at his daughter, before looking to Obi-Wan checking in with him. Seeing if he had actually figured out who the informant was.

Rey watched carefully as Obi-Wan scratched his chin. A minuscule nod of his head. Confirmation.

Bail swallowed. Uncomfortable. Uneasy. He gave Mothma a curt nod of his head. “I agree with Mon. It is likely the Emperor has a spy in place. We must be vigilant. We cannot become lax in our recruitment.”

Leia frowned, realizing she had missed something. Rey could feel her displeasure at being left out of the loop.

“It is not permanent,” Mothma stated clearly to the room. “It is temporary until we are certain that we are safe.” She looked at her datapad in front of her. “Up next is the move to our new base. Crait is now off the table, replacing it is D’Qar. D’Qar is another jungle or forested location — much like here. The cons are that it is not exactly ready for the amount of individuals we have currently. We will have to build up the base a fair amount to be able to house everyone comfortably.”

“So between there and Hoth is what you’re propositioning.” Someone called out.

Mothma nodded. “It is. Hoth is cold. Sixty below freezing at night. However, the base has more than enough room for us.”

Rey cleared her throat. “We could be at risk at night if our surveillance is not available. Can our T-47’s even run in those cold temperatures?”

“They should be able to.” Another person Rey didn’t know the name of.
She raised an eyebrow, making sure Mothma was paying attention. “They should be able to? Or they can? That is a big difference.” She looked around the table. “Because if they should be able to, and we find out once we get there that they cannot, then every single person at that base is at risk. I don’t know about you, but if I were a Sith Lord I’d storm the rebel base at night when you are all tucked in your warm beds. You wouldn’t even know anyone was there until I knocked on your front door. Literally.”

“But that’s assuming Vader even finds us. He doesn’t have probe droids, remember?”

Rey snorted. “Everyone else does though. Do you honestly believe Imperial Officers will storm our base without Vader there?” She shook her head. “He is the Emperor’s weapon. He is his monster. He will be there. He will probably be leading the stormtroopers through the doorway.”

“Do you think we should forget about Hoth then?” Mothma asked Rey.

Rey shook her head. “I’m not against going there...I just think that we need to be ready before we arrive. Our mechanics need to go over everything. The T-47’s need to be able to withstand temperatures colder than sixty below. They’re already difficult to fly. If our pilots flying patrol are worrying about the speeders will make it back to base they will be at risk of crashing.”

“Why are we even discussing going there if we have to rebuild the airspeeders?” Leia asked quietly. “I’m not a mechanic, but once we modify those speeders that is all they’re good for, correct?” A few heads nodded in confirmation. She looked to Mon sitting next to her. “We would be throwing away perfectly operational equipment for a few months worth of time spent on Hoth. Why are we doing that?” She shook her head. “We don’t have an unlimited supply of airspeeders available. From my understanding, it was a risk to get them in the first place. Who’s to say the manufacturer would give us any more?”

“What do you think we should do, Leia?” Obi-Wan asked. “If you were calling the shots, what would you do?”

Rey watched as Leia frowned. Taking into account what Obi-Wan was asking her.

“I’d look for locations ideal enough that we didn’t have to modify anything.” Leia said bluntly. “Beds are one thing...we can sleep in hammocks or on mattresses somewhere. On our ships even. We can set up rotations to eat so not everyone rushes into the mess hall for dinner at the same time. With the amount of able bodies we have, we can build the D’Qar base up to fit us in no time. It’d
only be a few weeks, maybe a month tops.” She frowned once more. “And why is Crait now off of the table? You said you trusted your informant, Chancellor Mothma. The fact that you met with them there shouldn’t impact whether we set up base there or not. If anything it makes it ideal. They wouldn’t think we’d meet with them on a future base.” She looked around the table, smirking. “We wouldn’t have to worry about running out of seasoning for our rations if we are set up on Crait.”

The room chuckled.

Mon nodded slowly. “I see your point Leia.”

Leia hummed. “I just worry about the future. What if someone else needs to fight against a corrupt government. If we didn’t leave any equipment behind, they would struggle greatly.” She looked around the room before stopping at Rey. “Even those blasted T-47’s that are apparently a pain in the ass to fly.”

“Because having something is better than having nothing,” Rey murmured quietly.

Leia smiled. Nodding. “Exactly. It’s difficult to have hope when you have nothing.”

Rey grinned. “Oh, I don’t know. Someone wise once told me that hope is like the sun. If you only believe it when you see it, you’ll never make it through the night.”

Leia grinned. Nodding. “I like whoever told you that. They’ve a good head on their shoulders.”

Rey nodded curtly. “They did.” It was you. Her throat was tight with emotion. Another wave of loneliness was overwhelming her. Another sense of unbelonging.

She exhaled slowly. Aware of the chatter around her but not paying it any attention.

She wanted to go home.

She pushed her chair back from the table. The speaking stopped. Rey cleared her throat. “I need to get some air. Apologies for leaving suddenly.”
“I’ll fill you in afterwards, Rey.” Ahsoka murmured to her.

Rey nodded and made her way out of the command center. She began wandering around the base, no destination in mind.

She wanted to be alone. These people were everywhere. Overwhelming. Emotions.

Rey clutched her hands to her chest. Exhaling deeply as she made her way towards the hangar.

She came to a stop in front of the TIE Advanced nestled off to the side. Hidden from curious eyes. *Home.*

She climbed up onto the wing support and popped the door open before dropping into the TIE. She felt more at home in Imperial ships than she did in anything else. She shut the door. Blocking out the noise of the base outside.

Sighing Rey curled up on the large seat. Knees pulled up to her chest. Forehead resting on her knees.

She hummed quietly. A song from her childhood. A song her mother used to sing to her as she brushed her hair and tied it up into her three little buns. A time before drink took her mother away from her. Before Rey had to do her own hair.

Rey rubbed her face. She couldn’t remember what her mother looked like. Or her father. Just a vague memory of two people. Average looking. Nothing of note to remember. Nothing to identify them from the next scavenger in the galaxy.

Junk traders on Jakku.

She sniffed. It didn’t add up — she had known that for awhile, but refused to give it any attention. Jakku didn’t begin trading junk until after the Battle of Jakku. She didn’t know what her parents did before then.
They were alive today. Somewhere.

Did she even want to find them? After all the time she spent waiting for them to come back to her. Did she even want to see them? What would she say to them, if she somehow found them?

Rey shook her head. She couldn’t tell them who she was. She couldn’t tell them anything.

She began sobbing. Heart wrenching sobs from deep in her chest.

She never felt so alone.

“Rey?” A quiet, raspy voice.

Rey’s head shot up, looking for the source of the voice. Her head turned to the side. Vader was sitting beside her without a helmet on.

She wiped her cheeks. Sniffling. Trying to pull herself together. Embarrassed that he found her crying.

“Where are you?” She gasped out.

“Hyperbaric chamber on my Destroyer,” he replied. He was watching her closely. “What’s wrong? Why are you crying?” Concern was humming from him.

Rey shook her head. “It’s nothing. It’s silly.”

He frowned at her. “It must be something if it’s affected you. What happened?”

Rey looked at her hands, trying to figure out where to even begin. “I’ve never felt so alone here. I miss my parents. I know they’re around somewhere, but I know that I can’t find them. I know that I can’t tell them anything. I don’t even remember what they look like. Not really.” She sniffed some more. “I’m hiding in your TIE because it feels like home to me.” She snorted. “The rebel ships feel... wrong. The Imperial ones feel like home.”
“Rey,” Vader began quietly. “I need you to listen to me closely. Can you do that for me?”

She nodded.

Vader blinked before continuing. “You need to let go of your parents. Of the idea of your parents. I know it’s hard. Believe me...I understand more than anyone how difficult that is, but you must do it.” He frowned. Hesitant. “If you were to somehow run into your parents in this timeline, it is highly likely they are not good people. You would be in danger.”

Rey swallowed. “What are you saying?”

He sighed. “You grew up on Jakku, Rey. The types of people living there were either scavengers who’d sell their own child for a bit of food or drink, or Imperial Officers. It was the perfect place to hide from prosecution, Rey. Imperial scientists — researchers — masquerading as junk traders.”

Rey’s stomach churned threateningly. She shook her head. “My parents are junk traders. They always were. They traveled to Jakku because your fallen Empire left a lot of junk behind. They are not Imperial researchers. They never were.”

She crossed her arms across her chest. Angry at Vader’s accusations. She glared at him.

He just nodded at her sadly. “If that’s what you wish to believe.”

“I believe it because it’s the truth. You’re full of banthashit if you think they are with the Empire. They wouldn’t ever do that.” Finality in her statement. Her Master was wrong. Mistaken. He didn’t understand.

She sniffed angrily.

Vader just watched her.

She huffed.
“You’re not alone, Rey. Please understand that.” Vader shook his head. “You have plenty of people who care about you. Kenobi, Ahsoka...myself. Others. Please don’t ever think you cannot speak with someone. Don’t make the same mistakes as me.”

She nodded curtly, still annoyed at his accusations of her parentage.

“Kenobi will listen. I will listen. Ahsoka will listen. Whatever you need to say. Whatever you need to talk about.” He was speaking from experience. Regret was humming strongly from him.

Rey nodded once more, ashamed of her outburst. “I’m not angry at you, Master Vader. I apologize for saying what I said. It was uncalled for.”

He gave her a small smirk, shaking his head. “You don’t need to apologize.”

Rey nodded. “What’s going on with you? Have you heard any news?”

Vader nodded. “I’m traveling to meet up with the other Destroyers carrying out the search. We’re supposed to check out a place called Yavin. I assume it will be empty like every other place I’ve been told to search.”

Rey’s eyes grew huge. Her stomach dropped to her feet. “How far away are you?” She was terrified.

Vader looked at her, his eyes large. Shocked. “About an hour out. You need to leave Rey. Go. Now! Get your Rebels and flee!”

She nodded and the connection broke. Rey shot up from her seat and climbed out of the TIE. She began running towards the command center. People jumping out of her way.

Bursting through the door Rey stopped dead in front of the Chancellor. “We’ve been found out! Vader is only an hour away! We need to leave now. He’s meeting up with the other Destroyers carrying out the search.”
Mothma jumped to her feet. “Evacuate now! Everyone grab something! Bail, sound the alarm!”

“Where?”

Mothma hesitated for less than a second. “D’Qar.” She glared at everyone. “We need to find the spy before we get to D’Qar. Only high command and pilots will know the location. Everyone move!”

The alarm started blaring, alerting everyone on base of the evacuation.

“Rey get your things from your room,” Obi-Wan told her. “We will fly out on the Falcon.”

“What about my TIE?” A stupid question, but she wouldn’t leave it behind.

Mothma shook her head. “Leave it.”

“No. I can fly it. I’ll meet you on D’Qar,” She turned to leave the command center.

“Rey. That is incredibly risky.” Obi-Wan said to her. “You shouldn’t be alone.”

Rey shook her head. “I’ll fly the TIE. I can back up the Falcon. It’s always the last to leave the base before everyone else.” She focused on Obi-Wan. “I will not leave that ship behind. I will stay here with it if I must.”

She wouldn’t lose something of Vader’s. Refused to. The Force was screaming at her that it was important she kept the TIE.

“Go. Hurry.” He was displeased but realized they had no time to argue.

Rey tore out of the room.
Running through the hallway she rounded a corner and slammed into someone. She hit her head against the man’s chest. He slammed her into the wall. Something sliced the back of her hand.

The dish cleaner was glaring at her. He had some sort of device in his hand. He dabbed it into her blood. The device beeped.

*Dangerous. A threat. Spy.*

Rey glared back at him and grabbed her lightsaber. She ignited it and impaled the man up through his gut. Killing him instantly. “I found the spy!” She yelled out.

Obi-Wan came running.

Rey disengaged her lightsaber and watched the man fall to the floor.

Obi-Wan skidded to a stop. Eyes wide in shock. “Are you alright?” His own lightsaber was in his hand.

Rey shook her head. “He cut my hand. Got my blood.”

Obi-Wan bent over and pried the device out of the man’s hand.

“What is it?” Curious.

Obi-Wan winced. “The Jedi Order had these to measure midichlorian counts on Force sensitive individuals.”

“Palpatine.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “What’s done is done. He’s gotten your results.”
“I can’t let it distract me. I need to get in the TIE. It’s important that I do,” Rey told Obi-Wan. “We can talk about it at the new base.”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “I will fly it to the base. I promise I will take it there, Rey. You cannot be alone.” At Rey’s protest he held up a hand. “I insist. You go with Ahsoka, Luke and Leia. I realize the TIE is important. That we need to keep it. But I will fly it. Is that understood?”

Rey gave him a sharp nod. “It’s tricky to fly into and out of hyperspace.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Grab Ahsoka’s bag and get into the *Falcon*. I’ll back you up.”

~ | ~

Rey sat huddled on the couch in the Falcon. Han was barking orders to Chewy. Luke and Leia had just arrived along with her droids — R2D2 and C-3PO. Artoo bumped into Luke’s legs before informing him he was heading into the cockpit to help Han and Chewy with anything they needed. He zoomed off without waiting for Luke’s response.

“What did he say?” Luke looked at Rey expectedly.

She grinned. “That he’s going to go help Han and Chewbacca.” She tried to give him a smile. It was more of a grimace. “You need to learn droid.”

Luke nodded in agreement.

Threepio shuffled into the seating area. “Oh my goodness. I’m not designed for this your highness.”

Leia smiled at the protocol droid. “How about you just take a seat next to Rey, Threepio? We will be out of here in no time.”

Threepio sat down on the couch next to Rey. Following his orders without comment.
Ahsoka came running on board with Breha and Bail Organa. Computers, datapads, and datacards floating in front of her.

“You have somewhere to hide sensitive information, Han?”

Han came storming out of the cockpit, nodding. “I sure do.” He gestured for Ahsoka to follow him through a hallway.

The Falcon started up. Chewbacca was running through the pre-flight checks.

Rey exhaled deeply. Shutting her eyes tight. The chaos of everyone fleeing the base was beginning to get overwhelming. She went through what had happened only moments before. The dish cleaner attacking her.

She had killed him. Impaled him.

She didn’t hesitate. Didn’t even blink.

Vader’s words were running through her head. His suggestion that she was the daughter of Imperial scientists. Experimentation, he had said on Crait. Biology.

She shook her head. He was wrong. Mistaken.

Her mother and father were junk traders. They always had been. It was the truth. It was fact.

“Your hand is bleeding.” A voice disrupted her thoughts.

Rey blinked. Breha had sat down right next to Rey and was holding her hand in her own.

“I’ll get a bacta patch.” Leia got up from her seat. “I know where Han keeps them.”
“It’s nothing.” Rey shook her head. “Just a small cut.”

“Nonsense.” Breha waved her off. “A patch will heal it quicker. There’ll be no risk of you getting an infection once we arrive at our new location. You have to be careful in forested locations for those sorts of things, Rey. They’re much different from the desert.”

Rey nodded. She didn’t want to argue that the desert had its own challenges. It’s own risks for infections.

Leia returned with a small patch in her hand. She handed it to her mother before sitting back down next to Luke and her father.

Breha removed the patch from its wrapping and placed it gently on Rey’s cut hand.

“Thank you,” Rey murmured quietly.

Breha grinned at her. “It’s no problem dear.”

Ahsoka and Han returned to the sitting area.

“Everyone here?” He asked as he did a head count.

Ahsoka nodded. “Yes. Obi-Wan is in the TIE waiting for us to depart. Mon and Draven and a few others were getting into their ship. We are one of the last to leave.”

Han nodded. “You want to man the guns?”

“Hell yes.” Ahsoka grinned. “We will talk later Rey.” She looked pointedly at her. Nodding at her hand.

“Alright.” Rey sniffed.
Ahsoka ran towards the gunner seat.

The Falcon began pulling out of the hangar.

Rey could hear Obi-Wan say something over the radio.

“We’ve got company!” Han yelled from the cockpit. “Brace yourselves!”

Chewbacca growled something rude.

Rey tensed. She grasped the seat with one hand and Breha’s hand with the other.

“Kenobi is sticking above us, Ahsoka! He will cover above, you underneath!” Han yelled out once more.

“Sounds like fun!” Ahsoka yelled back.

Rey exhaled slowly as the Falcon began fleeing from the base. Swaying movement from Han dodging fire.

She was waiting for any sudden movements — thinking back to her time flying the freighter while fleeing First Order TIE Fighters on Jakku. She allowed herself a small grin. If she was flying now, they’d all be upside down grasping on for dear life.

Han Solo was a better pilot than her. Him and Chewbacca. By a long shot.

She felt the small jerk as the *Falcon* entered into hyperspace.

She exhaled in relief.

They had gotten away from the Imperial Navy.
“What’s a midichlorian?” Rey asked quietly as she and Ahsoka sat at the little table in the kitchen of the Falcon. The pair of them were each nursing a hot mug of tea.

Ahsoka grimaced. “A midichlorian is what gives us our abilities. They’re microscopic...things. Organisms. There’s usually quite a range among Force sensitives with how many they have.”

“So...the higher the number of midichlorians, the stronger in the Force they are?”

Ahsoka sort of half shrugged, half nodded. “Some would argue that. Others not so much. It’s more to do with potential rather than actual strength. A higher count means higher potential, a lower count generally means lower potential.” She shook her head. “Some would argue that if the count is too low, training them in the ways of the Force, in the ways of the Jedi, is a waste of time. I never agreed with that mindset. It’s one of the many faults of the Jedi Order when I was a member.”

Rey hummed in thought. A memory from a couple of months ago on the _Devastator_ was running through her mind. “Vader said that it can be difficult for two strong Force sensitives to be in close proximity with each other. That they can pick up on each other’s emotions better.” She paused. “He said he was shielding himself from me so I wouldn't find him overwhelming.”

Ahsoka nodded. “He had the highest number of midichlorian counts ever in the Jedi Order. Over twenty thousand I heard. Apparently the midichlorian reader only reads up to that high...so no one knows exactly how high Anakin’s count is.” At Rey’s lack of reaction she elaborated. “Yoda is around eighteen thousand and he was the Grand Master of the Jedi Order. Kenobi is around fifteen thousand, I think.” She smiled at Rey. “I’m in the fourteen thousand range.”

Rey nodded slowly. “When Vader said I’m strong in the Force, he meant my midichlorian counts, right?”

Ahsoka gave her a nod. “Likely, yes. He can pick up on that stuff pretty quickly. He has always been very sensitive to...sensing people. Things.” She smiled at Rey. “He informed Obi-Wan on Tatooine that you were exceptionally strong in the Force. The fact that you could shield yourself so quickly after a short afternoon of training, supports that belief. That assessment.”

Rey shook her head. “I just had a really good teacher, that’s all.” She insisted quietly to the togruta.
“He’s been a really good Master to me. It’s easy when he’s telling me how to do something.”

Ahsoka grinned. “Anakin is pretty awesome, I’ll give you that. But you did pick up on things before you met him. Your fight on Starkiller Base, for example. Wielding a lightsaber for the first time and you won that fight against someone trained in both the light side of the Force for years, and the dark side.” She shook her head at Rey. “That was no small feat.”

“He was hurt. Injured.”

Ahsoka looked pointedly at Rey. “Which allows him to use the dark side easier. Why do you think Vader is so strong? So powerful? Losing a limb hurts. He’s lost all of them.”

Rey looked down at her mug of tea. She took a sip. “His burns aren’t healed yet either.” Quiet. Barely a whisper. She looked up at Ahsoka, meeting her shocked expression. Rey nodded. “I was on Mustafar with him. He needed to rest...he’d been awake for days, I think. He still has some open wounds. On his head.” She gestured to her own head. “On his cheek.” She indicated on her own cheek with her finger. “The wounds on his torso are mostly closed up. His burns.” Ahsoka nodded. “But he’s somewhat scarred still.” Rey frowned. “I think his bacta is poor quality. Diluted. Nineteen years getting treatment — he should’ve been completely healed by now.”

“But...he has access to the best quality available.”

“Does he?” Rey questioned her. “Or does the Emperor?”

Understanding hummed strongly against Rey. “He’s controlling him. His weapon.” Ahsoka looked sick. And angry.

Rey gave her a slight nod. “I think Palpatine knows that his apprentice is stronger in the Force than him. That Vader can likely easily overpower him. I think he is keeping him wounded to control him. Physically and psychologically.” Rey looked at her hands wrapped around her mug. “Everyone talks about Master and Apprentice, or Master and Padawan. But no one ever talks about Master and Slave. It’s taboo or something.” Rey snorted. “His limbs are old. They don’t even fit him properly. They’re extremely heavy when they don’t need to be. The cybernetics he’s been fitted with can be found on any backwater planet. The Core Worlds have much better quality nowadays. Coruscant has much better. They’ve had them for years. Decades.” Rey shook her head.

Ahsoka looked like she wanted to cry. “He’s forcing him to remain in pain. He’s forcing him to
remain saturated in darkness.”

Rey grimaced. Hesitating. “Because he failed his mission. He was supposed to wipe out the Jedi Order, and Kenobi defeated him on Mustafar.” She shook her head. “You must remember that he chose darkness. Anakin did. Vader did. He chose the dark side. He had to keep reminding me of that when I was with him. He didn’t fall by accident, it was a conscious decision that he made. To save his wife. To save Padmé.” She paused. “It was a choice he was willing to make. For her.”

Ahsoka glared. “Well...it was the wrong choice. Stupid boy.”

Rey grinned as she took another sip of tea. “He knows that too. He is well aware that his choice caused him to lose everything. I reminded him of that my first day here.”

They drank their tea in silence for a few minutes. Thinking about what was just said.

“He allowed you to see him outside of his suit.” Ahsoka quirked her head at Rey.

Rey nodded.

“He trusts you.” Ahsoka told her warmly. “With his life. Literally.”

Rey nodded once more. “I thought he was going to kick me out of his medical facility when he went into his bacta tank.” She shook her head. “But he just told me how to operate it. He watched me as his medical droids took everything off. His helmet. His shoulder armour. His suit. His limbs.” She swallowed. “Everything.” She took a sip of her drink.

Ahsoka grinned, before narrowing her eyes at Rey. “Even his fireproof Sith undies?”

Rey choked on her tea. Her eyes were watering. Cheeks pink. “I’m not answering that!” She gasped out.

Ahsoka chuckled darkly. Her whole body was shaking. “You answered it well enough already.”
Rey didn’t know how to respond. Embarrassed. She tried to shake off the heat in her cheeks. She took another sip of her tea. It wasn’t like she hadn’t seen a naked man before; her life on Jakku forced her to grow up quickly. It didn’t bother her. It was natural. There was no reason for her to be embarrassed. There was nothing going on between her and her Master. Nothing, except respect. She cleared her throat, refusing to meet Ahsoka’s eyes.

Ahsoka grinned at her. Sighing. “Bringing us back to what we were talking about before we got distracted.” She cleared her throat theatrically. “Midichlorian counts. The Emperor now knows your count. He’s scouting you, trying to figure out who you are. If you could be an asset to him, or an enemy. If your counts are high — which is likely — he will want to train you as his apprentice.”

“To replace Vader,” Rey murmured.

Ahsoka nodded in agreement. “To replace Vader.”

Rey frowned. “Could he find out other things with my blood sample?” At Ahsoka’s quirked brow, she continued. “My parents identities. My identity.”

The togruta hummed. “What do you mean?”

Rey sighed. Self-conscious. “My mother and father sold me when I was six. For drink. I don’t...I don’t really remember them. Just general things...but nothing that would identify them from one junk trader to the next.” She paused. Hesitant to continue. “Vader seems to believe that my parents were Imperial scientists before they were junk traders.” Rey looked down sadly at the table. She shook her head. “I told him he was full of banthashit. Said he was wrong.” She snorted to herself. “That’s what we were talking about before he told me he was heading to Yavin.”

Ahsoka nodded slowly. “Through your weird bond.”

Rey nodded. “I was upset. Emotional. It seems to open up when one of us is a mess.”

Ahsoka hummed, frowning. “I suppose Palpatine could technically find that out. But I don’t know for certain if he would. He has the ability to do so. The technology. The access to information. But...he might not care about that. He might just focus on your midichlorian counts.” She gave Rey a warm grin. “Your parents might not even be in the system. You could be right. They could be from the Outer Rim or Inner Rim somewhere. If that is the case, Palpatine would not have any idea who you are.”
Rey exhaled deeply in relief. She nodded. “Okay.”

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Obi-Wan yawned as he entered into another hyperspace jump. This was the fourth jump he’d taken on his way to D’Qar and it would last the longest. Three hours.

His adrenaline was beginning to wane. He needed something to eat; annoyed at himself for having such a small breakfast.

Unbuckling his harness he turned around in his seat, searching for the life support compartment. Ration bars and water should be present.

He grinned when he spotted the galactic life support symbol and popped open the latch. Inside was an oxygen tank and mask, five ration bars, and six small packets of water. Grabbing a packet of water and a ration bar, he turned back around in his seat.

He began to munch on his food and water. Sighing when the nutrients hit his stomach.

He hummed to himself. A lot had happened that he had yet to comprehend. He needed a clear head. He needed to understand.

Palpatine had a sample of Rey’s blood. The device he took from the deceased dish cleaner indicated that the reading went through to home base. Her midichlorian count would be known by the Sith Lord.

Obi-Wan scowled. Bastard.

The Force hummed in agreement.

He nodded to himself as he sipped his water. Pleased that the Force agreed with his character assessment.
Rey had also killed someone. Quickly and efficiently.

He frowned. If this was Anakin way back when he was still his Padawan, Obi-Wan wouldn’t have thought much of it. Rey was forcing him to second-guess his training. Hindsight was a blessing, as well as a curse.

Killing someone was wrong. Rey was a student.

He sniffed.

He should’ve been the one to kill the Imperial spy. The Master should be the one protecting the Padawan.

A beep from inside his go-bag behind his seat.

Obi-Wan set his water and bar down and reached behind his seat, pulling his bag into view. Unzipping the bag, he pulled out the datapad and flicked the screen on.

A new document was waiting for him to read, titled *Yavin*.

He clicked it open and sat back in his seat.

*Nice flying.*

*Dead man left behind in the hallway was someone by the name of Mar Zappal, FN-1301. A new cadet within the Imperial Navy.*

*Noticed some blood on his hands...whose blood was it? Who killed him?*

*Rey was upset about something. Feeling very alone with the rebellion. In tears when we connected.*

*Informed her that she had people who cared about her. People she could talk with.*

*Worried. See myself in her. She is attached to the idea of her parents. I believe she*
wishes to find out who they are. Ideal for manipulation.

Loneliness leads to stupid decisions.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. Nodding. He needed to inform Anakin what Palpatine had found out about his Padawan. He grimaced. He wasn’t looking forward to his reaction.

Sighing, he began typing a response.

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Vader sat at the table in his private quarters of his Destroyer, clutching his datapad in his hands. Waiting for Obi-Wan to respond to his message.

He had recently returned from the surface of Yavin 4. His soldiers were finishing up their search of the rebel base. The other Destroyers had already left, leaving the clean up for Vader and his team to complete. Like novice commanders were expected to do, he thought to himself. Bastards.

He needed to inform Sidious what happened. Another commander had done so already, but he knew his Master was waiting for his call. He knew he’d be blamed for the rebel’s escape. Perhaps he could place the blame on the dead Imperial spy.

He was thinking of an action plan, when his datapad beeped a response.

He clicked open the Yavin file and began reading.

Rey was attacked by Zappal. He sliced open her hand and read her midichlorian counts. From what I could tell, the results were sent to home base — assume that is Palpatine. Have device with me now.

Rey killed him before I could reach her. Impaled him through his gut with her lightsaber. Quick and efficient. Didn’t hesitate.

Jakku upbringing?

I apologize for not being there to protect her. I apologize for forcing her to kill
Will speak with Rey. Ahsoka is with her (and Luke and Leia) on another ship. Ahsoka knows what happened. Said she would speak with Rey. See how she is doing. Girl talk apparently...whatever that means.

Rey got upset at meeting. Emotional. Needed to clear her mind. Said something her General always said to her. About hope. Leia told her she liked the saying. Hit Rey hard. Reminded Rey that Leia is not her General. Still royalty. Still politician.

Homesick.

Advice?

Vader frowned. He wanted to protect Rey. Keep her safe. Anything more than that he had no idea.

His stomach churned as he reread the note.

Palpatine had her midichlorian counts.

Fuck.

He didn’t know what to say to Obi-Wan. He didn’t know what to do.

Vader thought of the young woman he came to know over the last few months. Rey the Force sensitive. Rey the scavenger.

Rey the survivor.

He closed his eyes, trying to keep himself calm. Rey could, and would, survive almost anything. Palpatine was another threat, absolutely, but Rey had dealt with threats for the majority of her life. She had dealt with odds not in her favour.

And she survived. Her resilience was outstanding.

He needed to remember that.
While she was still quite young, she was no child. She hadn’t been one for a very long time.

He nodded to himself. She’d be okay. They’d figure it out.

They always did.

He began typing his response to Kenobi. Offering suggestions. Opinions. Asking questions.

He was curious. About the Rebellion. About what they had to offer.

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Obi-Wan chewed his ration bar slowly. Eyebrows raised high on his forehead as he read Anakin’s response.

*Rey is likely now Sidious’ main focus for potential apprentices. She will be hunted. She will be at risk of being overpowered and taken to Coruscant. Keep eyes open for bounty hunters or suspicious individuals. He will pay whatever is necessary to get her.*

*Luckily she is resilient. Strong. She knows how to fight. She knows how to look after herself.*

*That being said, she wants a family. Badly. Sidious may use that to convince her to come to him herself. Somehow. Someway.*

*She needs to have a sense of belonging with the rebellion. A different kind of family.*

*Good for Ahsoka for chatting with her. Has the right idea.*

*Perhaps if she had different role in rebellion? Mechanic? Technician? She’d feel like she was back on Jakku with her ships. Different atmosphere from politicians.*

*Someone once told me that you cannot trust politicians. You need to remember that. Remember what you said.*

*It is a difficult environment for someone like Rey to be in. To be surrounded by individuals like that. It’s a lot for her to decipher. You have to remember her education consists of mechanical manuals and Imperial information. Everything she learned*
growing up on Jakku was learned by reading whatever she found on Star Destroyers.

Everything.

That is why she is homesick.

I am curious about how you are teaching her. Are you focusing on early youngling teaching or later stuff for older Padawans? I assume meditation is still being exercised between the two of you. But, are you teaching her how to wield her lightsaber? Are you teaching her how to detect the dark side of the Force? What it feels like?

It might be something to look at. She may not realize something is dark if she doesn’t know beforehand.

Sidious could take advantage of that. He could use her anger, her loneliness to get her to come to him. He could manipulate her into thinking he isn’t so bad. That he has something to offer her. Answers to questions that no one else can, or will, answer.

I also have questions about the Republic Alliance. Although, I am not sure if you can answer them.

What kind of medicine do you have? Your rebels from Scarif will likely have their cybernetic limbs by now. Are they a good quality? Do they snag on their clothing? How is your bacta?

Mine is shit — can find it on Tatooine. Same with my cybernetics — I can engineer better quality myself.

Obi-Wan blinked for a few minutes, running through everything Anakin had said to him. It was a lot of information to digest. To comprehend. He needed to sit down and speak with Mothma if he was understanding Anakin correctly.

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“Were you seeing anyone while you were at home on Jakku?” Ahsoka asked Rey with a small, friendly grin. “Boyfriend? Girlfriend? Anything like that?”

Rey looked down at the table. She shook her head. “No. I kept alone as much as I could. Just focused on scavenging.” She paused. Remembering. “I had some people I thought were friends...but it didn’t work out. I helped them fix up a ship. Got it to fly again. I suggested that I would fly it to Niima Outpost. Sell it to Plutt to get some food. They agreed with me.” She nodded to herself. “Once I landed, they overpowered me and threw me off the ship. They left Jakku. Left me behind. Starving.” She frowned. “I was ten.”
Ahsoka nodded sadly. “So you focused on looking after yourself.”

Rey hummed. “I did. I was waiting for my parents to return.”

“Did anyone else betray you while you were there? Or was it just that one time?” Curiosity was humming strongly from the togruta.

Rey frowned. She gave her a small nod. “When I was twelve.” She swallowed. “A traveler’s ship broke down. He needed a part. Didn’t have a clue about how to maintain his own vessel.” She shook her head. “Idiot.”

Ahsoka sipped her tea. “What happened with him?”

“He attacked me after I finished fixing his vessel.” Rey swallowed. Her throat tight. “He wanted me to leave with him. To travel with him. Told him I wasn’t interested. Had a bad feeling about him. Uneasy.” She sniffed. “I thought he had left Jakku. I was in my hammock sleeping when he showed up in my AT-AT. At the time I didn’t have anything to defend myself. No weapons. Just my fists. Just my own hands.”

“What happened to him?” Ahsoka asked gently. “He hurt you and then left?”

Rey shook her head. She met Ahsoka’s gaze dead on. “He tried to overpower me. Smacked me around a bit before I knew what was going on. I was told to kill him, so I did. Choked him with my bare hands. I held on tight as he tried to get me off of him. He couldn’t breathe. Eventually he stopped fighting back. Eventually he collapsed.” She shrugged. “I held on a bit longer, just to make sure, before releasing him.” Rey nodded to herself. “The following morning I strapped his body to the speeder he showed up at my home with, and drove it back to Niima Outpost. Dropped off his body in the centre of the Outpost and went about my day with my new speeder. I needed to scavenge. I needed food.” She shook her head. “No one bothered me after that.”

Ahsoka was watching Rey with huge eyes. Not speaking. Shocked.

“It was self-defence,” Rey told her bluntly. “He was a creep.”

Rey sighed. Closing her eyes in relief. She wasn’t being judged for defending herself. She clutched her mug of tea — her third so far — and warmed up her hands. Space travel was chilly.

Ahsoka cleared her throat. “When you say that you were told to kill the bastard…what did you mean? Was it the Force telling you that? Saying you were in danger?”

Rey hesitated. She shook her head. “I’ve always had feelings. Something is dangerous, or something is valuable enough for some food. Whispers or suggestions. But that time it was different. It was an actual voice in my head. A man.” She frowned. “That was the first time I heard him. The only other time was on Starkiller Base. When I knocked Kylo Ren to the ground. The voice was telling me to kill him. Identical to the time before.” She shook her head. “I considered it, but didn’t listen. It didn’t seem…right.” She sighed. “The ground opened up shortly afterwards. Splitting us apart. I fled with my friend Finn and Chewy on this freighter.”

Ahsoka nodded. She gave Rey a shaky smile.

“That’s not normal I assume?”

Ahsoka shook her head. “I’ve never had a man in my head telling me to do something. But I did drop out of the Jedi Order before I completed my training. I was still a Padawan. My knowledge about the Force has stagnated because of that. I never got to do my trials or anything like that.”

“Alright,” Rey murmured. She didn’t understand what she meant by trials. Perhaps Obi-Wan or Vader would tell her about them some time later.

“When we get to D’Qar we can ask Obi-Wan.” Ahsoka suggested. “Or you can ask Anakin in one of your little get togethers.”

Rey nodded.

The Falcon alerted that it was about to leave hyperspace.

Rey and Ahsoka got up from their seats and left the kitchen, making their way towards the cockpit to see where they were.
“This is it.” Han called out to them. “We’re arriving in the Ileenium System. It’s still some way to D’Qar. Another thirty minutes probably. It’s some distance from the hyperspace lanes.”

They puttered through the Ileenium System, Rey in awe at the vast amount of asteroids floating about in front of them. It was exactly like she remembered, before she left for Ahch-To.

She sighed. Calm.

“I take it we’ve entered into the system?” Bail called out quietly from behind Rey and Ahsoka.

“We have,” Ahsoka confirmed. “Another thirty minutes is what Han said.”

Bail nodded and left the cockpit to inform the rest of the passengers.

Rey quirked her head at Han’s lack of acknowledgement of Leia’s adoptive father. She pursed her lips, fighting a grin. He was intimidated by him. Distrustful because he was a politician.

She cleared her throat. “The tea is a nice touch. Better than your girlfriend’s parents finding your stash of Corellian whiskey.”

Chewbacca roared in laughter. As did Ahsoka.

Han grinned sheepishly as he steered the Falcon around some more asteroids. “I’m a smuggler,” Han said quietly. “No amount of tea will make up for that fact.”

Rey nodded. “True...but saving his daughter’s life probably does. Luke’s as well.”

Chewbacca trilled his agreement. He slapped Han on his shoulder in camaraderie.

“We’ll see.” Han acknowledged. Uncertain. Unsure.
Rey raised a brow. “Does Leia care that you are a smuggler?”

Han shook his head. “She said she doesn’t give a shit. A job is a job. Said she doesn’t care what her father says...that her mother likes me just fine.”

Rey gave him a curt nod. “Well there you go. It doesn’t matter.”

Chewy roared his agreement.

Rey sighed once more before turning to leave the cockpit. Deciding to sit with everyone else for the remainder of the trip.

Making her way towards the sitting area, Rey smiled as Breha patted the seat next to her.

“Come sit next to me Rey.” She smiled warmly at her. “Let’s take a look at your hand.”

Rey sat down next to Breha, placing her injured hand into her palm.

Breha began carefully peeling off the small bacta patch. Humming as she did so.

“This has healed well.” She smiled at Rey. “You should have no risk for infection.” Her thumb rubbed over the back of Rey’s hand, where the cut used to be. It was still slightly pink, but otherwise completely healed.

Rey grinned. “Thank you for helping me.”

“Anytime dear.” Breha returned her smile, giving her hand a squeeze before she let it go.

Rey shut her eyes. Tired from the long day traveling. Tired from the quick escape from Yavin. She sighed, hoping she’d be able to take a short nap sooner rather than later.
“I have a question for you, Rey,” Bail stated quietly but firmly.

Rey hummed. Indicating he could ask away.

“When you ran back into the command center after fleeing earlier, stating that Vader was only an hour away...how did you find that out?” Bail was smiling at her as she blinked open her eyes. “Where did you get that information?”

Leia quirked her head in interest. Luke nodded slowly, illustrating his interest in the answer as well. Breha cleared her throat at Bail, glaring at him with a displeased expression.

Rey raised a brow at the politician. Aware that Ahsoka had turned her attention to the sitting room and was now just out of sight of everyone except Rey. Watching. Waiting. “I spoke with him, actually. He informed me himself. With his words.”

Shock reverberated throughout the room.

“He informed you himself?” Bail was cautious. Worried.

Rey nodded. “He’s my Master. I’m his Padawan. It’s a thing we have. Two exceptionally powerful Force users, we can chat with each other on occasion. He likes to check up on me. Likes to make sure I’m being treated well.” She shrugged. “I did show up in his TIE...the fact that I had a connection to him was never hidden away. I’m actually surprised it took so long for someone to question me about him.” She smiled at Bail.

“He checks up on you?” Bail questioned her quietly.

Rey nodded, still grinning. “He does. He used to tuck me in when I was training under him. Gives me hugs.” A beat of silence. “He’s a big softy.”

Chuckling could be heard from the cockpit. Han was having a difficult time keeping himself quiet.
“He’s a murderer.” Bail was angry. Righteous anger. “He’s killed thousands of people. Children.”

Rey nodded. “He has. But so has every single person in the Republic Senate when they refused to help those in need. When they refused to aid starving slave-children on Tatooine or some other desolate and corrupt world.” Rey shook her head at the man sitting across from her. “Ignorance and inaction are just as deadly as a lightsaber, Senator Organa. I grew up scavenging parts of crashed ships to trade for ration portions in order to survive, while your Republic patted themselves on the back for all the hard work they did for the Core Worlds.”

She took a look at both Leia and Luke. Quirked her head at Breha, who was hiding her mouth behind her hand in shock. She focused back on Bail. “Vader may be a Sith and a murderer, but he will not lie to you, or talk down to you with a smile on his face like you politicians do. What you see is what you get with him. His mask is worn only to survive. You politicians wear your masks in order to hide your true selves.”

“Rey, sweetheart. Things cannot change overnight. Bail and others tried to abolish slavery repeatedly while in the Republic Senate.” Breha squeezed her hand, trying to give Rey comfort. “We tried to end the corruption. Tried to help the less fortunate worlds. Alderaan did provide aid to those worlds regardless of the lack of support from the Senate. You cannot blame him for other’s refusal to help.”

Rey blinked away her tears, refusing to cry. She snatched her hand away from Breha. “Things change overnight all the time. The only reason corruption in the Senate and slavery in the galaxy has never been abolished is because of compliance and incompetence.”

“I agree with Rey.” Luke told the room quietly. “You may have seen images of slaves in your data files as you were being educated in your academies, but I’ve seen them in person. I grew up with them on Tatooine.” He was nodding at Rey. His eyes full of understanding. “Jabba the Hutt has ruled Tatooine for hundreds of years. How long do the citizens of Tatooine have to wait before help arrives? Before someone cares?”

Rey snorted. “No one will care unless there are resources to take. In Tatooine’s case — that is likely never. It’s the same with Jakku.” She stood up from her spot next to Breha and made her way back into the cockpit. Back to Ahsoka. Back to Han and Chewy.

Ahsoka nodded at Rey as she made her way around the togruta.

Chewy trilled comforting words to Rey. Asking if she was alright. If he could do anything for her.
Rey just shook her head in response as she watched Han carefully land the Falcon next to a few other rebellion ships.

He and Chewbacca began powering down the vessel.

Rey sniffed, trying to get her emotions back under control. She cleared her throat, before exhaling slowly.

“You did good kid,” Han said quietly to her. Turning around in his seat, he gave her a curt nod. “You did good.”
“I spoke with your Master on the way here,” Obi-Wan murmured quietly in Rey’s ear. It was the morning after the majority of the rebellion arrived on D’Qar.

Rey gasped, spinning around in her seat to look at Obi-Wan directly. Her eyes huge in excitement. Keen for any news.

He grinned at her. “How about we go for a walk. Scout out some possible locations for training — that sort of thing.”

She nodded enthusiastically at him.

He watched as Rey tucked her half eaten ration bar into her pocket before standing up from her spot in the newly founded mess hall. He quirked his elbow, allowing Rey to tuck her hand in the crook of his arm and slowly and calmly they made their way out of the room.

Obi-Wan was well aware of the curious looks he was getting from Bail and Breha Organa on the far side of the room. He’d have to chat with them later. They were good people. He knew Rey’s words had hurt them greatly. But he also knew that Rey had a point. They needed to be called out over the lack of action from the Senate back in the Galactic Republic days. Just like the Jedi Order needed to be called out.

Rey was right: inaction and ignorance were just as deadly as a lightsaber blade.

Obi-Wan hummed as the pair of them left the small mess hall. Turning to his left, he led Rey through the makeshift hangar, taking note of her interest in the numerous vessels.

“Where’s Ahsoka?” Rey asked him as they made their way away from the base and into the surrounding jungle.

Obi-Wan grinned dryly. “Sleeping. She’s been up for a couple of days.” A pause. “We shared some of Han’s whiskey last night as we got caught up. Togruta are notoriously light drinkers, so she is nursing a bit of a hangover. It’s best if we allow her to rest.” He looked pointedly at Rey.
“We wouldn’t want to upset her. She has two lightsabers to defend herself.”

He watched in amusement as Rey snickered.

“I like her.”

Obi-Wan grinned warmly. “Me too.”

Together they walked in silence. Occasionally stopping to watch a small animal scurry in front of them. Obi-Wan could feel the curious eyes watching them. Critters. Avian creatures. All cautiously watching the new occupants that they’d now have to share their home planet with.

They stopped in a small clearing. Ancient, dead trees had tipped over, allowing sunlight to bleed in and reach the floor of the jungle.

“Ah,” he said pleasantly. “We can train here, don’t you think?” He turned around, taking in the location. It'd be perfect for meditation as well as lightsaber training. “But first... first we must talk.” He gestured for her to take a seat on a large boulder.

He sat down next to her. He could feel her nervousness. Uncertainty. Sighing, he projected calmness. Comfort. “You’re not in trouble, Rey. At all.”

Rey nodded as she focused on the ground in front of her.

“Vader was able to identify the spy. A fellow by the name of Mar Zappal.” He blinked. Swallowed. “He was a new recruit with the Imperial Navy. FN-1301. His... assignment to get your blood sample was likely his first.”

Rey nodded once more. “Palpatine wants me. And now he has my midichlorian counts.”

“That is what Anakin and I believe, yes.” He sighed. “We must keep a watch out for bounty hunters. Suspicious individuals.”
“Which is what we were doing already,” Rey stated quietly.

Obi-Wan nodded. “It is.” He paused. Hesitant. “He has also asked me if we can adjust a bit of your training.” At Rey’s intrigue he continued. “He believes that Palpatine will attempt to seduce you to come to him yourself. Offer you answers to questions that no one else can.” He held up a hand to stop her from interrupting. “That’s how he works Rey. It’s how he has always worked. Vader believes you need to learn what the dark side of the Force feels like. To prevent that from occurring. If you are unaware, you may not realize what is going on. You may not realize what is happening.”

“I don’t want to learn about the dark side,” Rey insisted quietly. “What if I fall?” Her lip quivered slightly. “I have enough anger as it is. I know that. What if I cannot keep myself out of the dark once I learn about it?”

“Anger.” He shook his head. “Having anger does not mean you are dark, Rey.” Obi-Wan tried to comfort her. “Everyone has anger. It is what makes us human. It is what makes us people. Emotions are not your enemy.” He looked at her carefully. “Knowing how to respond to that anger inside you will help prevent yourself from falling to the dark side. It is not our emotions that cause us to become entirely dark. It is our actions. If we allow our anger to control us, that increases our risk of letting the darkness inside of us to have control. However, if we acknowledge that we all have darkness, we all have anger, we figure out how to control it. We can deal with our emotions better. In a healthier way, if you will.”

Obi-Wan watched Rey closely as his words slowly began to register to her. As she slowly began to understand.

“What will our new training be like?” Curious.

“Well,” he paused. Frowning. “We will continue to do what we were doing. We will just add some more stuff.” At Rey’s confusion he clarified. “I will talk to you about how the dark side of the Force feels. How one taps into the part of the Force, and why. What dark objects feel like. Precautions for you to take. That sort of thing. We will start off small. Theoretical.” Rey nodded. “Perhaps we can meet up with Vader at a later time and he can explain certain things. Perhaps he can explain the dark side from his own personal experiences with it. Explain what it feels like for him.”

Rey was silent for a few moments.

Birds were singing their morning tunes. Critters were calling out to one another.
“Alright.” Quiet. Barely above a whisper. Rey turned to look directly at Obi-Wan. “I’ll agree to that.”

He gave her a pleased smile along with a nod of his head.


Rey nodded sadly. “Do you think he’ll switch sides?”

Obi-Wan inhaled sharply. Pondering his answer. When he finally reached it he exhaled slowly. Deeply. “Eventually, perhaps. Hopefully.” He rubbed his beard. “I don’t believe it will happen tomorrow, or the next day. But I do believe he wishes to be around his children. I know he wishes he was around you. You’ve helped him already so much. He knows that. He is grateful for that. He cares about you.”

Rey smiled. “The Sith Lord who cares. The angry Jedi Knight.” She quirked her head at him. “Balance.” She splayed her fingers in front of her, interlocking her fingers together. “Balance...right in the middle of the two.”


“I like the sound of that,” Rey hummed.

Obi-Wan nodded to himself. He did as well.

The two were silent for a few moments. Taking in their surrounding environment.

Rey sighed. “What else did you wish to speak about? I can feel your worry.”
Obi-Wan raised a brow, hiding a smirk. She was getting better and better at reading people. Reading their feelings. “The man who spoke to you on Jakku and Starkiller Base.”

Rey nodded curtly. “It’s not normal, is it?”

He hesitated only for a second before shaking his head. Rey deserved to know the truth. The voice wasn’t normal at all.

It was cause for worry.

“Can you explain it to me?” Rey’s nervousness was humming around him. Her unease. “No judgement,” Obi-Wan reminded her.

Rey nodded. “I first heard it when I was twelve. I got attacked at night in my AT-AT. A man was attempting to *abduct* me, I think.” She shook her head. “At least that.” More hesitation. “I was scared. Terrified. He was hitting me. Grabbing me. Trying to get a hold on me.” She exhaled slowly. “The voice — the man in my head — he told me to kill him. Just those words. *Kill him.* Nothing more than that.”

“Was the voice angry? Yelling?”

Rey shook her head. “No. It was calm. Calm but...assertive. Like someone stating a fact that they knew.” She looked Obi-Wan directly in the eyes. “*Kill him.* Like an order.” She cleared her throat before continuing. “I strangled the creep with my bare hands. I held on tightly as he tried to get me off of him.” She shivered. “It took forever.”

Obi-Wan felt as his stomach churned. Unease. Ideas running through his head. Familiarity. He gave Rey a small smile. “And on Starkiller Base? The same?”

Rey hesitated for a moment before nodding. “Basically.”

She was hiding something. Ashamed.

“Can you explain that one to me? In detail?”
Rey looked down at her hands in her lap. “I got the drop on Kylo Ren. Sliced his face open with my lightsaber. He was sprawled on the ground, watching me. Waiting for me to do something.” She sniffed. “Waiting for me to make a move to kill him.” Barely a whisper. “I had my lightsaber in my hand, still ignited. I was slowly walking around him. The hunter stalking around the prey, just before the kill. I heard the man once more. Same voice. Same calmness. Same order. Kill him. I considered it. Even took a step closer to him before I paused to think.”

“And then the base split open.” Obi-Wan supplied quietly. He watched as Rey gave him a jerky nod of her head. He sighed. What he was thinking did not make any sense. At all. But it fit. Almost perfectly.

It reminded him of a failed Order 66. An updated version of it perhaps.

Experimentation. Biology.

Did Vader see the plans to create a super soldier? A Force sensitive super soldier? Was that what he was hiding from them? Keeping from them...to protect his Padawan?

He rubbed his beard. “And you’ve not heard the voice once you arrived here, at this time?”

Rey shook her head. “Nothing at all.”

He needed to check her head. Scan it. Like the clone soldiers.

He needed to ask Anakin what he found out about Jakku. He needed to get his advice. He paused his thoughts. Frowning. “You never told Vader?”

Rey looked back down to the ground. Ashamed. She shook her head. “No.” She sniffed. “I was still getting used to being around him. I’d only been on his Destroyer for a few weeks. I wasn’t comfortable with telling him. I kept things vague, and he never prodded for more information. Not about that at least.”

Obi-Wan nodded in understanding.
“Will you tell him?” Rey asked quietly. “Over the datapad?”

“Is that alright?” He should probably check with her before he shared her secrets with her Master.

Rey hesitated only a moment before nodding.

“Did you want to head back to the base?”

“That’s it? You’re not going to discipline me for snapping at the Organa’s?” Confusion was wafting hard against Obi-Wan.

He grinned, shaking his head. “Nope. I wasn’t even going to bring it up.” He sighed. “They needed to hear it. Their ideals are good, but the practicality of them leave much to be desired. They are good people, trying to help. They have, however, lived a very entitled life. They are very sheltered — as were most of the political leaders in the Senate. As were the Jedi in the Order.” He shook his head at Rey. “So no...I will not be disciplining you for saying your piece. For saying what they needed to hear.”

He chuckled softly. “I think you probably shocked them with your bluntness. The way you speak is very different to how politicians speak. They didn’t need to decipher anything to get to the point of what you were saying.” He sighed. “I will speak with them after we head back. I will make sure they are alright.”

“Alright.”

“I almost forgot,” he said as the pair of them stood up and began heading back to the base.”Vader also mentioned that you were upset when the two of you connected.” Shame once again hummed around him. He waited until Rey acknowledged him with a nod. “Homesick was what he said. He had some advice for that.” Intrigue. “He suggested that we take you out of the command centre and place you in with the mechanics and technicians in the hangar. That you can help with the maintenance of our fleet.” He stopped walking. Turning to look at Rey. “Does that sound like something you’d like to do?”

Rey nodded. “It may help. I like fixing things. Tinkering.”
Obi-Wan grinned. “Then that is what we will do.” He frowned. “A few of our vessels got clipped by fire from the TIE Fighters above Yavin. They still function alright, but they do need to be fixed up. And from what I understand, our x-wings are always needing maintenance.”

Rey nodded once more. “Alright.”

Obi-Wan sighed. “Perhaps you can see if your TIE is running alright too. It could do with a systems check. It’s been awhile. It’s likely you will know more about that vessel than the other mechanics with us. You will also have to refill the life support compartment. I got hungry.”

Rey snickered as they made their way into the hangar. “You should’ve had a bigger breakfast.”

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement.

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“How is Rey? Is she doing alright? I fear Bail and I may have insulted her.” Breha greeted Obi-Wan on the ramp of the *Tantive IV*.

“She is fine.” Obi-Wan kissed each cheek in greeting before bowing his head. Customary for greeting Alderaanian Royalty.

“Oh tosh.” Breha waved him off. “That is not needed Obi-Wan. We are friends. Family.” She turned to lead him into the vessel. “Please do come in. We were just having a sit down together as everything gets set up around the base.” She led him into the ship. “I heard from Mon that it all should be up and running by tomorrow evening.”

“That’s good to hear.” Obi-Wan followed Breha into the sitting room, waiting until she sat down before he took his own seat. Bail nodded his greeting.

“Hello Obi-Wan.” He smiled at him. “Thank you for coming to speak with us.”

“It’s my pleasure.” He acknowledged Bail calmly. He was trying to get a read on them. To see how they were really feeling about Rey.

Rey had really thrown them for a loop.

He sighed. Pinching the bridge of his nose before rubbing his beard. “I am going to share some information about Rey. I ask that you keep it to yourselves.” The two of them nodded. “This is information that myself and Ahsoka are aware of. Mon knows some as well.”

“Of course.” Bail nodded in understanding. “Complete confidentiality.”

Obi-Wan frowned. Wondering just where he should begin. “Rey grew up on Jakku — a desert world located in the Inner Rim.” He quirked his head. “I am not sure if you are familiar with it?”

Breha nodded. “I looked it up last night. There wasn’t a lot of information to go on. Not much was present about the planet. There was mostly just basic geographical information.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Rey’s parents left her there. They sold her to an individual with a stronghold on the planet when she was just six years old.” Shock and sadness hummed around Obi-Wan. “She has been looking after herself since then. At least.”

Breha nodded in understanding. “She’s a survivor. Reliant on no one but herself.”

Obi-Wan continued. “The government on the planet is nonexistent. It always has been. Republic or Empire — for Rey there is no difference. She and everyone there have always been invisible. Irrelevant.”

“How did she come into contact with Vader?” Bail asked him quietly. “She said she was his Padawan. She showed up on Yavin in his TIE.”

Obi-Wan sighed. “It’s complicated. Very complicated.” He hesitated. “She showed up on his Destroyer...a day or so before Luke and I arrived on Alderaan. Vader found me on Tatooine. Told me that Luke and I needed to flee. That the Emperor was after Luke. That the Emperor would be after Leia once he found out about her.” He paused, thinking before continuing. “Vader was not aware that his children had survived until just before he paid me a visit on Tatooine.”
“Which is why you told both Luke and Leia who their biological father was.” Breha murmured. “So they’d both be aware. Not caught off guard later on.”

Obi-Wan nodded his head in acknowledgment. “Rey is trying to help us win the war against the Empire. She is...aware of certain information that no one else is. The Force has...allowed her to know certain things.” He grimaced. “I’m not trying to sound mystical, I assure you, it’s just difficult for me to explain how Rey is helping us without telling you everything.”

Bail nodded slowly. “And you cannot tell us everything because that would put us at risk.”

“Exactly.” Obi-Wan conceded. “Only Rey knows exactly what the Force has told her. She is at an extremely high risk of being captured by Palpatine. That was why the spy was there on Yavin. He got Rey’s midichlorian counts.” Bail’s eyes widened. “Palpatine has her count now.”

Bail broke eye contact. Looking down to the floor. Gathering his thoughts.

“The datacard with the second Death Star plans,” Breha murmured softly. “Rey got us those.” She quirked her head at Obi-Wan, waiting for his answer.

Obi-Wan winced slightly. “Vader got us those plans,” he corrected. Shock. Disbelief. “Before the Death Star was destroyed by Luke, he was able to find the plans for the second one. He gave the datacard to Rey, to give to the Rebellion.” Obi-Wan could feel the shock humming from the pair of them. Uncertainty. Hope. “He tried to stop Tarkin from firing on Alderaan.”

Bail closed his eyes in sadness. “He protected Leia above Scarif. Helped this vessel flee safely. He shot down his own squadron above the Death Star to protect Luke. To make sure Luke was safe to take the shot.” He blinked open his eyes, focusing on Obi-Wan. “Han said he was moving in front of the second TIE to take the second shot, when Chewbacca took the TIE out instead.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Family is extremely important on Tatooine. I learned that whilst I was hiding there, watching Luke. Family before anything else.”

Breha sobbed quietly. The thought of her homeworld still broke her heart.
The two men let her gather herself before they continued a few moments later.

“Vader and I are also in contact.” Obi-Wan dropped the next bombshell. “He speaks with Rey occasionally — they have a bond that allows them to talk with one another. Mothma is aware, as is Ahsoka. No one else.” He looked pointedly at the pair. “Except now Han, Chewy, Luke, Leia, and you two because Rey let that slip by mistake. She let her emotions get the better of her.”

Bail nodded curtly. “No one will say anything. Luke and Leia know not to. We’ve already spoken to each other about that. Han and Chewbacca won’t say anything either. Leia ordered the pair not to. They will listen to her.” He gave Obi-Wan a wry smile.

Breha cleared her throat. “Is there anything Bail and I can do for Rey?” She asked Obi-Wan quietly. “I realize our...way of life on Alderaan may seem like a slap in the face to her. Given the way she was forced to grow up.”

Obi-Wan exhaled slowly. “I think the best thing you can do is listen to her words. I realize she isn’t the most...eloquent. That she is very different from those involved with the Senate. Her education consisted of teaching herself about different starships. The mechanics of vessels. Not University. Not political academies.” Breha and Bail nodded sadly. “But, I also believe that she has a huge heart. That she cares deeply about people. About the galaxy. I do believe she wants to fix all of our errors that we all seem to continually make.” He gave the pair a slight smile. “The Jedi Order is not protected from her criticism. Mothma has heard it as well.” He paused. “We made quite a few mistakes. All of us.”

“Ignorance and inaction are just as deadly as a lightsaber blade,” Bail stated quietly.


Breha frowned. “Is Vader one of our informants?” She looked between Obi-Wan and her husband. “The one that Draven mentioned…”

“Yes and no.” Obi-Wan said quietly. “Myself, Rey, and Mon met with Vader on Crait. But, Draven is in contact with another individual upon the Devastator.” He hesitated. “Vader doesn’t wish to wipe out the Rebellion. He wishes to be around his Padawan. His children. He knows that Palpatine needs to be defeated.”

“But it’s complicated,” Bail murmured. “He is caught between a rock and a hard place.”
Obi-Wan nodded. “He is.”

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Vader sat alone at the table in his private quarters. Sidious had waved off Vader’s excuses for the rebels fleeing Yavin. Didn’t blame him at all. Didn’t care.

It made Vader uneasy.

Sidious was focused entirely on Rey.

He closed his eyes. Trying to keep his worry in check. Trying to keep his mind clear.

A beep from his datapad alerted him of a new message from Obi-Wan.

Vader grabbed onto the datapad, searching for the message. He blinked when he spotted a new file. *Questions & Thoughts*. He clicked the file open and began to read.

*May I ask what you found out about Jakku? Experimentation and biology are vague and good enough for Mothma and Rey. But, I assume there was something there that caught your attention.*

*I ask because I have learned some information about Rey. Something that she was hiding from all of us. Ashamed.*

*She heard someone speaking to her in her mind. A man. He gave her an order to kill someone. This has happened twice — both times before she showed up on your ship. Once when she was twelve. Again on Starkiller Base. Just two words: kill him. Nothing more than that either time.*

*Assume it is tied in with Jakku. With what you’ve found. Have a feeling it is similar to other orders certain individuals were forced to carry out.*
Will inspect Rey for any implants. Just to be safe. Medical vessel just arrived to base. Fully stocked with almost everything a Core World would have access to. However, supply is not unlimited. Have to restock occasionally.

Mothma informed me that Republic Alliance has access to high quality cybernetics and high quality bacta. However, will need time before surgery is possible. Need both droids and healers to carry out surgery properly. Need people we can trust.

Vader frowned as he finished Obi-Wan’s message. Unease settled in his stomach. He felt like he was about to be sick.

He swallowed. Grimacing, before he began his response to Obi-Wan.

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Obi-Wan stood behind the healer as she was instructing Rey how to position herself within the imaging machine. Hovering. Watching Rey on the screen closely.

She was shivering. Uncomfortable. Freezing.

He winced. Medical facilities were always chilly. The fact that Rey was dressed in a thin, cloth gown and slippers only added to the cold.

“How long will this take?” He asked the healer quietly.

“Ten to fifteen minutes,” the healer informed him softly. “I can record everything as we scan her. She doesn’t need to be in there for longer than that.”

He nodded.

The healer began speaking once more to Rey. Instructing her to shut her eyes. Informing her of the noise and bright lights of the imaging machine.
“Alright,” Rey responded quietly. Shutting her eyes tightly.

Obi-Wan watched as she exhaled slowly. As she fought to remain calm.

He leaned back to speak to Ahsoka who insisted on watching the proceedings. “She’s terrified. Afraid of what we could find.”

Ahsoka nodded once. “I’ll meet her in there once we’re done. I can spend some time with her in the hangar. Fixing ships calms her down.”

The imaging machine began scanning Rey.

Obi-Wan focused on the images on the screen in front of him. Nothing jumped out at him. Nothing was out of the ordinary.

“Nothing in her brain,” the healer told the pair of Force sensitives. “I’ve captured video and can check once more just to be certain, but I would bet there wasn’t a chip implanted in her brain.” She typed some commands into her keyboard. “We will start on the rest of her body now. Should only be a few more minutes.”

“I’ll go meet her.” Ahsoka left Obi-Wan’s side quietly. Making her way into the same room as Rey.

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Obi-Wan yawned as he got ready for bed. The healer was unable to spot any sort of chip anywhere in Rey. She wasn’t like the clone soldiers. There was no chance of another Order 66 occurring.

While pleased with what they didn’t find, they were still no closer to figuring out the reason for the voice in Rey’s mind.

Obi-Wan sighed. It was something they needed to figure out. The Force was indicating to him that
it was important.

A beep from his datapad.

Vader had responded.

Rubbing his eyes, he grabbed the device and opened the file.

Two words stared back at him that made his breath catch in his throat.

*Genetic engineering.*
Chapter 18

Rey and Obi-Wan made their way into a tiny meeting room nestled away from the main part of the base. It was currently raining heavily outside; the region of D’Qar that the base was situated in had just entered into its rainy season.

It was something Rey had forgotten about in her recommendation. She never realized planets had different seasons throughout their orbits around their sun. Nothing this drastic at least. It was something she never had to think about on Jakku.

There it was always dry season. Always.

She shivered as she sat down on a rickety old chair, clutching her mug of caf. Rainy season was chilly here.

Obi-Wan grinned at her as he too got settled in his own seat across from her. “No one blames you for not realizing the seasons, Rey. Most people here are aware that jungle vegetation generally means lots of rain.”

Rey snorted. “I didn’t. I thought it was just a humid place with lots of green. Lots of trees and birds.” She shook her head at herself for her mistake.

“But if you think about it,” Obi-Wan began, “being here during the rainy season is actually a good idea. It provides better cover for us. No one will want to scout the place in their search for us. Too muddy. Too messy.” He paused. “You’ll just have to get used to the rain. We will just have to figure out somewhere inside to practice our meditation and lightsaber training. It’s no big deal.”

Rey nodded, taking a sip of her caf.

Obi-Wan sighed. “I would like to explain to you what the dark side of the Force feels like. How one...taps into that part of the Force.” He looked at Rey over his mug. “Does that sound alright with you?”

Rey nodded enthusiastically. He was careful to always check in with her to make sure she was okay with something. No secrets. No surprises. He didn’t want to catch her off guard. “Sounds like a plan.”
“The dark side of the Force is called upon by Force sensitives when they draw power from very strong, very raw emotions. Emotions like anger, fear, hatred, jealousy...passion.” He frowned for a moment. “That’s not to say that a lightsider does not feel these emotions too. They do. What differentiates the lightsider from someone bathed in the dark side, is that they do not allow these feelings to control them. These emotions.” He paused making sure Rey was still following. “That is what the Jedi mean when they say to let go of the anger — to let go of the jealousy.”

Rey frowned. It made sense, in theory, but she couldn’t see how it would work practically. She didn’t understand how one was supposed to ‘let go’ of their feelings. It didn’t seem natural. “I don’t understand how a Force sensitive is supposed to just...let go. My emotions make me who I am. They are a part of me. They always have been. If I let go, I would be denying part of myself. Part of who I am as a person.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. “What if I used a different word? What if I said analyze or understand instead of ‘let go’?” He watched Rey’s reaction for a moment before continuing. “So instead of a lightsider letting go of their anger, for example, and a darksider holding onto their anger, I mean a lightsider is able to look at their anger and pick apart what they are feeling and why they are feeling it. That knowledge leads to a better understanding of oneself, does it not? Instead of just...being angry — furious — about something, and refusing to understand the reasons why. The true reasons why the anger is there in the first place.”

Rey hummed for a moment. It was better. But she still wasn’t sure. “Can you give me an example?”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I can try. Tell me about Vader. About the Sith Lord you met only months ago. What reasons did he give you for falling to the dark side? For being seduced by the dark side.”

“He said he didn’t fall to the dark side — he chose it. Consciously chose it over the light side in order to save his wife.” Rey paused, thinking back to her many conversations with her Master. “He was terrified he’d lose Padmé. Palpatine offered him help, but only if he did exactly what was asked of him. He said that he was convinced that only the dark side had that kind of power. To prevent someone from dying.” She swallowed. “Vader said that Palpatine told him of a Sith called Darth Plagueis, who apparently figured out a way to create life using the Force. Palpatine told Vader that Plagueis was so wise that he even figured out a way to prevent loved ones from dying.”

Rey sipped her caf. “So if we are talking about emotions, I would say fear played a huge part in his choosing of the dark side. I think he was terrified. Desperate. That he felt he had no other choice — no other options. And that blinded him to see any sort of reason.” She cleared her throat. “He told me that he was half out of his mind when you defeated him on Mustafar. That he was half out of his mind when he...wiped out the Order and the Separatists. When he pledged his allegiance to
Darth Sidious.”

Obi-Wan was silent for a few moments. He exhaled slowly. He gave Rey a shaky nod of his head. “Using the example of Anakin choosing the dark side. Fear is the key emotion there. Desperation is a side effect from that. As is him being terrified of losing Padmé.”

Rey nodded curtly. That made sense to her. It was easy to see.

“Now.” Another pause. “If Anakin was able to...step aside and assess his feelings appropriately — if he stopped to think for a moment and rationalize his fear — he would likely have realized that he was being manipulated. That analysis of his fear likely would have prevented...a lot.”

Obi-Wan was upset. Rey could feel as his own emotions hummed around the tiny room. She waited until he pulled himself together. “The light side can be blinded too...can’t they?” It was something she didn’t understand. How no one could see a Sith Lord right in front of them. “I mean...they couldn’t see a really bad person right in front of them. No matter how much they prided themselves on their...understanding of the Force. Of themselves. They couldn’t see Sidious. They couldn’t see the darkness saturating every single thing around them.”

Obi-Wan nodded, looking down at the stone floor. “A flaw, a huge flaw of the Jedi Order, was the belief that we were all-knowing. That we understood the Force better than anyone else. We misunderstood our code: There is no ignorance, there is knowledge. Our belief that we were all-knowing, led to our ignorance of a Sith Lord right on our front steps. We were blinded by our knowledge. We became arrogant.”

Silence for a few moments.

Rey thought about what Obi-Wan had just said. His lesson. His teaching. “So what you’re saying is, if I am able to step aside and look at my emotions from an...outsider’s perspective...there is less of a chance of me falling to the dark side.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I think it boils down to just...stopping to think things through. If something doesn’t seem quite right, question it. If you feel like you are becoming controlled by your anger, your loneliness...stop and think. Talk to someone. Anyone.” He sighed. “Palpatine likes to isolate. He can control things better that way. I was on a solo mission, likely organized by him, when Anakin pledged his allegiance. Padmé was taken away from Anakin. Anakin’s vision of her dying was likely from Palpatine. It was how he gained complete control of his new apprentice.”
Rey sighed, nodding her head.

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “If you find yourself around something dark, there are certain feelings that you should be able to pick up on.” At Rey’s nod he continued. “Coldness is extremely common. Some also find it to be...oily, or greasy. Also, one will find that their emotions will be heightened. Emotions like anger, or fear, or hatred. The dark object finds a way to bring out the darkness found in everyone.”

Rey hummed, thinking back to Jakku. “So when you said that Carbon Ridge felt like a Sith holocron to you, you meant that because of what happened to Plutt’s crew? The two members got killed. You said it’s likely that they took each other out. The Sith holocron inside Carbon Ridge brought out their darkness — even though they were not Force sensitive.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Exactly.”

Rey thought about her time in Vader Fortress. “I felt as if something was checking my shields when I was staying on Mustafar. I could feel the...curiosity. The intrigue at something new.” She frowned. “I thought I could last the fourteen days there...I really did. But it got harder and harder everyday I was there. I was so angry by the ninth or tenth day.” She sniffed. Ashamed.

“When did Vader come back? How many days did you spend there alone?”

Rey blew out a long breath. “Eleven, I think. Snoke was a couple of feet away from me on the other side of the wall. I had hidden inside it.” Rey smirked. “I have never been more happy to hear a Star Destroyer drop out of hyperspace so close to me. I’ve never been so relieved to hear the screaming of TIE Fighters as they zoomed by me hidden in the spires of Vader Fortress.” She sniffed. “I could feel Vader as soon as the Destroyer dropped out of hyperspace. I mean the real Darth Vader — the Sith Lord. The nightmare. Not the person he is around me.” Rey shivered at the memory. “I felt his loathing and hatred for Snoke. His darkness. His absolute power.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. “You were lucky Snoke didn’t find you.”

Rey looked down at her mug clutched in her hands. She took a sip of her caf. She nodded. “I know. Vader damaged his Destroyer dropping out of hyperspace the way he did. The way he ordered his pilots to. Cracked the engine containment.” Rey shivered once more. “I had to wait inside the wall as stormtroopers carried out the search for a possible second intruder. Vader had to tell Palpatine why he fled Coruscant with only half of his crew. I was hidden in there for about three hours total.” She scratched her arm. Remembering. “I was dehydrated and in shock when he finally got me out of the wall. He helped me make my way back to his medical facility. He got me water.
Some food.” A pause. “He tucked me in. Protected me.” Barely above a whisper.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat after a moment. Letting Rey gather her thoughts. “That hatred you felt — the loathing he had for Snoke — that is how he taps into the dark side of the Force. He used those emotions to embrace the dark side in that moment.”

“To scare off Snoke.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “Most likely. Or because he really, really hates him.”

“Because Snoke went after — will go after — his grandson. His family,” Rey added on. “Family is important.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “Very much so.”

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Rey sighed as the sound of her lightsaber hummed in her ear. She blinked her eyes open to find Luke waiting a ways from her with his own lightsaber ignited and ready to go.

Rey smirked. Twirling her saber.

“Now remember...this is not a real duel, it is a training session,” Ahsoka called out. Likely because she could feel Rey’s glee at wielding her saber once again. “I would like to see your balance. I would like to see your moves. I want to see the theory that you’ve both learned put into practice. A small poke with the tip of your lightsaber on the shoulder of your opponent to finish the session.”

“Do try not to hurt each other,” Obi-Wan added on. “Certain individuals would be most displeased.”

Chuckling could be heard throughout the hangar. The training session had attracted quite a crowd — the majority of rebels were hiding inside because of the deluge of rain that was currently pounding the base.
“Begin.”

Rey twirled her lightsaber once more, before slowly and cautiously making her way around Luke. The pair of them stalking each other. The hunter stalking the prey.


She twirled her lightsaber once more. Waiting for him. Baiting him.

Rey grinned.

Luke glared at her before charging towards her.

Now.

Rey brought her saber up, blocking Luke’s attack. Their lightsabers cackling as the two blades met. Sparks flying.

Rey twisted her blade free and gently Force pushed Luke away from her. She twirled her blade once more. Mocking him.

Luke grunted before coming at her once more. Their blades clashed again.


Again and again Rey fought off Luke’s swings. He was beginning to breathe heavily. He was beginning to tire out. She could feel his frustration as she continued to withstand his attacks.

Rey felt invincible. Like nothing could touch her. No one would hurt her again. Ever.
The comments from the bystanders were nothing but background noise. Rey was entirely focused on her task. On her mission.

She glared at Luke as he twirled his own lightsaber. She could feel his nervousness now. His fear. His hesitation.

He charged at her once more. This time, not quite as confidently.

He brought his blade up to burn her shoulder slightly — the mark of the loser. Of the victim.

No. Not this time.

Rey leaned back, allowing the Force to cradle her gently. She swung her lightsaber at Luke’s midsection. His ribs. The spot that he tended to leave open. The spot he almost always left vulnerable.

A white blade hooked around Rey’s blue blade just as it touched Luke’s ribs.


Rey blinked at the third blade before running her eyes up the hilt to the hand holding it. Her eyes raced up the arm before finally stopping on the face of Ahsoka.

Ahsoka was looking at Rey. Her eyes huge with worry. “It’s alright Rey. You won. We can stop now.”

Rey quirked her head. She swallowed. The sound of the chatter in the hangar came rushing back.

Someone was swearing loudly. Colourfully.

A woman. Leia.
“Rey focus on my voice. Not anyone else’s.” Ahsoka was trying to get a better balance. She was palming her second lightsaber, just in case.

Rey nodded. She pulled her lightsaber back, before switching it off. She swallowed once more. Self-conscious. Worried. She didn’t understand what she had done wrong. She wasn’t going to kill Luke, she was only going to burn his side a bit. Like Vader did to her to teach her a lesson.

Luke needed to know his weakness. It was important.

Ahsoka quirked her head at Rey. “You alright?”

“I’m fine,” Rey protested quietly. “I wasn’t going to kill him. He leaves himself open all the time. He needed to learn to protect himself. Or else someone would slice him in half.”

Ahsoka nodded as she hooked her own lightsaber hilts back on her belt. “I felt a surge in the Force. Just before Luke came at you that last time.”

Rey blinked. Taking in the scene around her. Luke was cradling his side, fighting off tears. Obi-Wan was chatting quietly with him. Leia was unpeeling a bacta patch to place on his open wound.

Rey swallowed. The wound was similar to the one Vader had given her that night in his training room. She grimaced. Her stomach churned.

It wasn’t part of the rules. She wasn’t his Master teaching him a lesson. He wasn’t her responsibility. Why had she done it? Luke hadn’t hurt her. He hadn’t rejected her. It wasn’t him who refused to teach her the ways of the Force. Not this Luke.

She was going to be sick.

Rey fell to her knees and heaved up her breakfast. Letting her sick splash onto the floor.

Rey let out a sob. “I didn’t mean to. I swear!” She looked up at Ahsoka crouching in front of her. “I
was just teaching him a lesson. My Master did the same to me. On my side.” She pulled up her shirt to show the faint scar on her ribs. “I wasn’t trying to hurt him. I swear, I wasn’t.”

“It’s fine Rey,” Luke called out to her. “I’m okay.” His pain could be heard in his voice. “I left myself open. It won’t happen again. I promise.”

Rey nodded at him from on the floor. Her vision blurry. Ashamed. She could feel numerous people watching her closely. Judging her. Fearing her.

A hand was placed gently on her shoulder. Obi-Wan was now hovering over her. Calmness was enveloping her. Trying to relax her.

“I felt the surge as well Rey. As did Luke,” Obi-Wan muttered into her ear. “How about we all find somewhere private to sit and discuss what happened?”

Rey nodded once more, allowing Obi-Wan to help her to her feet.

The Force sensitives made their way into a nearby ship — the Tantive IV. Leia was leading the group into her parent’s vessel.

Obi-Wan helped Rey sit down on the small couch in the seating area of the vessel. He sat down next to her, clutching her hand in his own.

Rey focused on the floor, afraid to make eye contact with anyone around her.

“Why do you and Luke have the same lightsaber?” Leia cut to the chase. “I thought those were supposed to be unique to the...Jedi or whatever.”

“Obi-Wan asked me not to ask,” Luke told her quietly. “He said it would be explained later.”

Leia snorted. “It’s later now.”

Rey nodded. The Force was humming in agreement with Leia’s statement. “She’s right.” She met
Obi-Wan’s eyes. He hesitated for a moment before giving her a curt nod of his head.

Ahsoka hummed quietly. She squeezed Luke’s hand. She gestured to the twins. “You two need to understand the seriousness of what you will be learning. The need for secrecy. Only Rey, myself, Obi-Wan, Mothma, and Vader knows about this. No one else.” She looked pointedly at the two of them. “You cannot discuss what Rey will be sharing with you with anyone. Not even your mother and father, Leia. Not Han. No one.” A pause. “Is that understood?”

Both Leia and Luke nodded their acceptance of the conditions. “Understood.”

Rey sighed. “Leia is right when she said that we have the same saber. It is the same. Just from a different time.” She eyed her lightsaber that was clutched in Obi-Wan’s grasp. “That saber was your father’s when he was a Jedi. Then it became Luke’s. And then, after it was lost in a battle, it called to me.”

Silence. Rey looked up from her gaze on the floor. Confusion met her. Luke and Leia were not following along.

Rey sighed. “I’m from the future.” Shock erupted in the room. Pushing hard against Rey. “Just over thirty years in the future. The Force...decided that it was a good idea to send me back to this time. I went to sleep one night, in a little hut on a little island, and woke up thirty six years in the past in a storage closet on Vader’s Star Destroyer with a pounding headache and ringing ears.”

“Rey told Vader about his children. About his family.” Obi-Wan sighed. “The following day he found me on Tatooine.” He looked pointedly at Luke. “The Emperor had felt the disturbance in the Force, much like I did. Palpatine, however, believed the disturbance to be Luke awakening in the Force. I believed the disturbance to be from either you Luke, or Leia. I believed one of you to be in serious trouble.” He grimaced. “Vader told me otherwise. Told me about Rey appearing on his Destroyer. Told me about the plans for a second Death Star. Told me about the Emperor’s plans to find Luke and turn him to the dark side. To replace Vader as his apprentice.” Obi-Wan nodded. “We needed to hide. Needed to flee. Tatooine was no longer safe.”

Silence. Luke and Leia were thinking about what they were told. What they had learned.

“I’m sorry for hurting you Luke,” Rey said quietly. “I shouldn’t have done that. I was tired of being hurt. Of being rejected. You are not the one who hurt me. You’re not the Luke who refused to teach me the ways of the Force.”
“Is that what happened...in your time?” Luke’s uncertainty rang strongly. “I was a teacher, a Jedi Master?”

Rey nodded. “I was going to pester the other you some more the following morning to teach me.” She shrugged. “Instead I woke up in the past.”

“Have you figured out why the Force sent you back in time?” Leia was cautious. “I know you’re speaking the truth, no matter how far-fetched it seems. The... Force is insisting that it’s true.” She frowned. Annoyed that the Force wanted anything to do with her.

Luke nodded in agreement. He believed Rey and Obi-Wan as well.

Rey hesitated. “I think so.” She looked to Obi-Wan for confirmation. “I think I’m supposed to fix things. Fix the mistakes that were made.”

“The Empire fell in Rey’s timeline,” Obi-Wan stated quietly. “The Republic Alliance technically won, but at a huge cost. A lot of people were killed. More and more mistakes were made. The same ones that allowed the Galactic Empire to rise up and take control in the first place. The same mistakes that allowed a new Empire to form.”

Leia looked down at the floor. “The Core Worlds focused on themselves while everywhere else had to fight for survival.” She met Rey’s gaze dead on. “Scavenge for survival.”

Rey nodded. “The remains of the Empire had hidden away in the Unknown Regions. Rebuilt themselves using children from the Outer Rim planets. Made them into soldiers. Into stormtroopers. Prepared to bring the fight back to the Republic. Took them...over thirty years, but they were able to wipe out the entire Republic Senate. The entire system.” She swallowed. “They had found a way to construct a third Death Star.”

“Well that’s — that is — we cannot let that happen.” Leia’s voice was quivering with emotion. “I refuse to let that happen. To let another Alderaan happen.”

Luke was looking down at the floor. He cleared his throat. “Why did it happen this time?” His bright, blue eyes met Rey’s. “Did that happen before? Why couldn’t you prevent that from happening again?”
Rey’s lip quivered. “Me and Vader tried to stop it from happening. I swear. Last time — in my history, I mean — he tortured Leia for information about the location of the Rebel Base. Of Yavin. The Leia of that timeline refused to break. He couldn’t get into her mind. Tarkin retaliated by destroying Alderaan, forced her to watch. That Leia still refused to talk. She was awaiting her execution when Luke, Obi-Wan, and Han showed up on the Death Star to rescue her.”

“This time, this Vader helped us flee.” Quiet. Almost a whisper. “He was trying to prevent all that from happening, wasn’t he? To prevent me from being tortured. To prevent Alderaan from being destroyed.” Leia’s understanding hummed strongly in the seating area.

Rey nodded.

“I think there were too many unknown variables for the destruction of Alderaan to be prevented,” Obi-Wan said softly. “Too many things at play.”

“That and Tarkin is a right sack of banthashit.” Ahsoka fumed. “He was the one who ordered the destruction. Not Vader.” At Luke’s shock at her statement, she expanded. “We have a history. It’s not a pleasant one.”

“So...what do we do now?” Leia asked after a few moments. “We can win the war. We’ve done it already. Can we do it quicker?” She was looking at Rey with a strong sense of keenness. Eagerness.

“I’ve changed a lot already.” Rey looked to Obi-Wan. She didn’t know what exactly to say. “Some people are still alive that were killed by this time in my past. We aren’t even at the same base the Rebellion was at in my timeline.”

“Hoth?” Leia asked her dryly. At Rey’s confirmation she snorted. “Thank the stars for that. I’ll take rain any day over sixty degrees below freezing.”

“Who died?” Luke’s voice was quiet but firm. “You said last time some people were already dead at this point.” He frowned. “Who died?”

Rey looked back down to the floor.

Rey’s timeline Bail and Breha were on Alderaan when Tarkin ordered its destruction.”

Sadness and understanding hummed around the room.

“Small changes. But significant ones.” Ahsoka sniffed. “I was found on Malachor about four years earlier than I was in Rey’s timeline.”

Leia frowned. “You spent seven years on Malachor? Draven and Mothma said you went missing three years ago, everyone thought you were killed.”

Ahsoka grinned, shaking her head. “I jumped ahead in time. About three years ahead. I was in a world between worlds. A portal of sorts. I only actually spent two weeks in the Sith Temple. I think I was put right where I needed to be. The Force works in mysterious ways. It didn’t work for whatever reason in Rey’s history — in her timeline; but in this timeline I think it is. I think everything is slowly falling into place. The way it should be.”

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Rey sat down next to Obi-Wan in the tiny meeting room that they had met in before. She was self-conscious. Uncertain.

She knew what Obi-Wan wanted to speak with her about.


Rey curled her arms around herself. “I was thinking back to my first training session with Vader. He wanted to see what I could do. He basically just let me attack him, while he easily fought me off. We spared for quite a while until I made a mistake and left myself open.”

“Which is where the little scar on your ribs came from,” Obi-Wan provided quietly.

Rey nodded. “I kept thinking back to being hurt. People hurting me. I didn’t want to be hurt again. Refused to allow someone to hurt me again. Not Luke with his refusal to teach me, not my parents
for abandoning me on Jakku.” She sighed. “I felt...invincible just before Luke charged at me the last time. Like nothing could hurt me.”

“Invincible.” Obi-Wan was curious.

Rey nodded.


“Is that... bad?” Rey could feel her worry press against her shields. She tightened them up. Keeping them nice and snug.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “Did you feel like...you knew what was going to happen before it actually did?”

Rey frowned. That was exactly what it felt like. She nodded. “My focus was entirely on Luke. On winning against Luke. I couldn’t hear the crowd or anyone until Ahsoka jumped in.” She paused.

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “Alright. That’s nothing to be worried about. You just haven’t gotten entirely used to using your abilities yet. You or Luke. It takes years to train properly. To learn.” He gave Rey a small smile. “You did very well in your pretend duel. The fact that you were able to pick out Luke’s weaknesses is a good thing.”

Rey nodded, sighing in relief.

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“Thank you so much for joining us, Rey,” Mothma said warmly to her as Rey sat down in the newly constructed command centre of the base. “How are you finding the hangar? Is it alright with you? Enough work to keep you busy?”

Rey nodded as she got comfortable in the seat next to Mothma. “It’s great. I’ve been tinkering on a few of the T-47’s, trying to figure out a way to make them a bit easier to handle. I know they’re difficult to fly. Myself and Jan are also looking at a way to adapt them to different environments —
rather than just having them as strictly airspeeders. We are looking at ways to make them functional in swampy areas, or even desert worlds without the risk of damaging any of its parts.”

Mothma was surprised. Pleased. “That is great to hear. I hope to be able to be kept up to date on what the pair of you figure out. It will allow us to have a larger bank to choose from for when we are searching for a new base once again.”

Rey nodded. That was why she was doing it. To make sure the Rebellion was prepared for anything and everything. “Why did you need me here for this meeting? Has something happened?”

“We’ve heard word from one of our contacts that Cymoon is on the table,” Obi-Wan answered her from the other side of the table. Han and Chewbacca were standing behind his seat. Kes Dameron was seated in between Obi-Wan and Draven.

Bail and Breha were sitting next to their daughter. The rest of the high command had left the room for this particular meeting.

Obi-Wan sighed. “Our contact has mentioned that Jabba the Hutt will be sending representatives to negotiate a better deal from the Empire.”

Rey nodded slowly. “How many days from now is the meet?” She looked at Han and Chewy. At Obi-Wan.

“Three,” Obi-Wan answered. “We will have to move quickly to prevent Jabba’s representatives from reaching the weapons manufacturing plant. We plan to intercept the shuttle as it leaves Tatooine. Take out the representatives.” He gestured to Han standing behind him. “Han here has worked for Jabba the Hutt in the past. He will act as his emissary while on Cymoon.”

Rey nodded. That was what had happened before. “Jabba’s emissary would likely have bodyguards. Two at least. With masks to hide their true identity. A droid or two as well.” Rey quirked her head at Leia who was fighting a grin. “Your astromech and protocol droids should do the trick.”

Leia grinned, nodding her agreement. “I’m sure they’ll be splendid in their mission.”

Artoo bleeped his excitement.
Threepio was far more hesitant. “I will do what is required of me, your highness.” A pause. “Even if it is not in my specifications.”

“I assume the rebellion will use this opportunity to hurt the Galactic Empire even more, following the destruction of their superweapon.” Rey raised an eyebrow at Draven.

He gave her a curt nod. “Absolutely. The plan — to be quite blunt — is to destroy the factory. Our team needs to reach the power core and override it. Cause it to overload. Set it up to explode. Take itself out.”

Rey nodded slowly. “What about the slaves there? What about them?” At the shock of some of the occupants seated around the table she rolled her eyes. “Oh, come on! Jabba the Hutt is dealing with the Empire because he is supplying them with cheap labour. That factory is not fully automated. Nothing ever is.”

Mothma nodded her agreement. “Myself and Obi-Wan are in constant communication with our contact...we are putting together the finishing touches on that part of the mission.”

“I still don’t understand why I cannot be filled in on who your contact is,” Draven said in annoyance. He frowned as he took a sip of his caf. “I obviously trust them. Their information has been extremely helpful thus far.”

Rey quirked an eyebrow at Obi-Wan who was successfully hiding a grin behind his beard. “You probably wouldn’t like them if you did find out their identity.”

Han narrowed his eyes at Rey. Smirking. He had likely already figured out who the contact was. Chewbacca was huffing in quiet laughter. “Keep it down fur ball,” Han muttered dryly.

Bail pinched the bridge of his nose. The man was stressed. Breha was clutching her mug of caf tightly. Silent but nervous.

“Bringing us back to the main plan,” Obi-Wan continued on, ignoring Draven’s curiosity. “Han gets us in the door. Two bodyguards and two droids with him.” Rey nodded. “You’re thinking someone Force sensitive — to be able to sense just who is meeting with us.”
Rey nodded. “I can go. I know my way around mechanics.” She knew she’d be denied her offer before she even said it aloud.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “I’ll go. Dameron can be my second.”

“Yes sir,” Kes called out cheerfully. He gave Obi-Wan a two-finger salute.

The group discussed the finer points of the mission for the next couple of hours. Bouncing ideas off of each other. Obi-Wan and Mothma carefully checking in with Rey to see if the plan seemed appropriate. If what they were going to do was good enough. Smart enough.

Han, Chewbacca, R2D2 and C-3PO, Kes, and Obi-Wan would be leaving the following morning. They needed to capture and overpower the shuttle leaving Tatooine far before it entered into Cymoon airspace.

They needed to be ready.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone for continuing to read this ❤️

It means a lot!

I had a bit of trouble writing this chapter, it felt choppy and bleh, so I ended up rewriting it. I do hope it’s alright. It’s definitely better than the other one.

Enjoy! ❤️

“Lord Vader, sir,” a voice said over the comm in Vader’s hyperbaric chamber. “We are about to arrive at the rendezvous point.”

Vader blinked his eyes open. The light of his chamber shining bright. His helmet slowly made its way around his head. Encasing him once more. He took a breath. Blinking some more as his eyes adjusted to the enhanced vision of his eyepieces. “Understood. Have a transport vessel ready.” His chamber opened up slowly, allowing him to leave.

Vader quickly made his way out of his quarters, heading towards the main hangar of the Devastator.

Montferrat greeted him once he stepped into the hangar. “Lord Vader. We will have a vessel waiting on standby if you find yourself unable to get away from the factory.”

Vader gave him a curt nod as he made his way towards the Lambda-class T-4a shuttle. “I am uncertain if this shuttle is large enough for our intended cargo. We will need to have a pilot on standby just in case. Also, our healers need to be notified of the potential likelihood of a high number of patients arriving shortly. Non-human.”

“Of course sir.” Montferrat nodded in agreement. He peeled off to notify the intended parties.

It was something that they had no choice but to work with. If Vader showed up in an overly large shuttle with no one but him inside, the Imperial Officers staffed in the weapons factory would know right away that something was amiss. They would question what was going on. They would likely notify Sidious or someone else high up in command.
He couldn’t risk it. Not yet.

Vader made his way up the loading ramp of the shuttle. His mind racing as he sat down in the pilot’s chair. The Force was silent on his and Kenobi’s plan. Dead silent. Like it had been for Rey when they had to decide where to hide her during Empire Day celebrations.

It made Vader uneasy. Uncertain. It was a pivotal situation — that was why the Force was silent. It was up to Vader to decide what he would do. How he would react.

Vader rolled his eyes as he pulled out of the hangar. Stupid Force. He would’ve preferred some sort of direction — he wasn’t sure he trusted himself with making the right decisions.

He could’ve sworn the Force was laughing at him. Chuckling at his thoughts. “I wouldn’t be laughing if I were you. I’d be worried,” he muttered as he set the hyperspace coordinates into the ship’s navigational computer. “I’m shit at making my own decisions.”

The Force hummed around him, providing him with comfort. Confidence.

Vader shook his head once more. Stupid Force.

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Clutching the controls tightly as the T-4a dropped out of hyperspace, Vader grimaced as the shuttle wobbled. This thing was a pain in the ass to fly alone. Absolute garbage.

He scowled to himself as he flew closer to the industrial moon.

“Attention unidentified vessel, please state your identification. Failure to do so will result in your obliteration!”

Pleasant, Vader thought dryly. He flicked on the microphone in the shuttle to respond. “Attention WF Alpha, this is Lord Vader, identification code is Alpha-Tango-zero-zero-five-five. Seeking
permission to land at your factory. Scheduled meeting with representatives of Jabba the Hutt.”

“Lord Vader! Thank the stars you’re here. The rebels — they’ve taken control of the factory!” A fearful voice said over the radio. “I’ve opened up Landing Platform One for you. I will attempt to meet you on the platform.”

“Understood,” Vader said calmly. Probably too calmly. He purposely left out the order to lock the place down. He and the rebellion needed a clean getaway.

He opened himself up in the Force. Allowing him to figure out just where everyone was. He let his darkness leech through his shields. Warning Kenobi that he had arrived.

Vader landed the Lambda-class shuttle roughly on the platform before quickly shutting down the vessel and disembarking. Overseer Aggadeen greeted him shamefully. A large head wound was evident on the man.

The rebels had knocked him unconscious.

Vader smirked behind his mask. Aggadeen failed at his job — he knew he would be punished. Lethally this time. “Where are they?” He greeted Aggadeen. The pair of them quickly made their way inside the factory.

“On one of the lower levels, Lord Vader. They’re attempting to reach the power core,” the overseer whined. “The majority of my men are dead. Electrocuted by a blasted droid.”

Vader grinned. It sounded like something Artoo would do. He wondered if his old droid was one of the ones that Rey insisted tag along for the mission. Vader turned to face Overseer Aggadeen fully. “You’ve let the rebel scum take control of the factory. Aggadeen. Your men are weak. Pathetic.” He pointed a gloved hand at the man. “If they gain control of the power core, they can override it. They will blow this place to the stars. The factory would be in ruins. The Galactic Empire would be hurt drastically if they are successful.”

Aggadeen nodded shakily. “I know Lord Vader. There are a few troopers attempting to overtake them. Attempting to protect the factory. They are trying to prevent that from happening.” The man was a mess. Terrified. He knew what was coming. “Please...please...I can fix this. I swear. I can fix it.”
Vader ignited his lightsaber and drove its blade through the man’s gut. He pulled him close. “It’s too late for that. The rebels have likely already succeeded.”


The overseer was dead.

Vader disengaged his lightsaber, letting the man fall harshly to the floor before quickly making his way through the factory. Following the trail of bodies piled on the floor. Troopers laying in a puddle of liquid, unmoving. Down the hallway he went. Around the corner. A handful of guards with blaster wounds — also deceased.

Vader shook his head to himself. There was no evidence whatsoever of Kenobi using his lightsaber. He was correct in his initial assessment of his former Master when he visited him on Tatooine.

He was getting old.

Vader could hear blaster fire ahead of him. He was getting close to the action. Closer to the Rebels he’d be working with.

He strolled around another corner to find four stormtroopers with their backs to him, firing on three men and a droid. His own droid. Artoo.

A stormtrooper turned to look at who was now standing behind them. Relief wafting strongly from him. The trooper lowered his weapon upon seeing Vader standing nearby.

Vader shook his head at the mistake. His ignited his lightsaber and sliced through the four troopers — bisecting them entirely.

He stepped over the bodies, making his way towards the Rebels. “Where’s the room?”

Obi-Wan stood up first. “Just down this side hallway.” His gaze didn’t leave the dead troopers in front of him. Too much death. Too much war.
Kenobi was tired of fighting a never-ending battle. He blinked a few times before focusing on Vader standing before him.

“Just down here,” he repeated. Gesturing towards a side hallway.

Vader nodded slowly. He could feel the unease around him and disengaged his lightsaber.

He took a closer look at the two other men present on this mission. One, an obvious soldier, must be Dameron. The other man must be the pilot — Han Solo. His daughter’s future husband. Vader quirked his head at the man.

He hoped he was as good a pilot as Rey said he was.

“We need to hurry,” Vader said to the rebellion. “The overseer regained consciousness...I am unsure if he was able to call for help.”

“Dead?” Han raised an eyebrow and rubbed his fist.

Vader smirked. He liked him already. He gave Han a curt nod. “He failed his responsibilities. He knew the cost of failure.”

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “We best get a move on it then.” He led the way down the hallway — his lightsaber hilt clenched tightly in his right hand.

“You still owe me an explanation Kenobi,” Dameron growled out as he too made his way down the empty hallway. “I don’t want to work with him. With Darth kriffing Vader!”

Obi-Wan waved off the man. “Later. Not now. Now we focus on our mission and make sure it succeeds. There is no room for error.”

Vader was barely listening. He was searching for the supposed slaves that Rey had mentioned. They were around here somewhere.
The group came to a stop in front of a reinforced set of double doors. The power core was behind them.

“Three. Two. One.” Vader and Kenobi pulled the doors open. Han and Dameron crouched low, ready to fire on anyone present.

A handful of engineers were present. Four total.

Four blaster shots were fired by Dameron and Han. Killing the threat instantly.

Artoo bleeped his thanks before zooming into the room to get to work.

“We need you to override the safety protocols,” Obi-Wan said quietly to the droid. “The power core needs to overheat. We need time to evacuate everyone before this place goes up in flames.”

Artoo bleeped and whirred as he plugged into the database of the factory.

Vader quirked his helmet at a question Artoo asked the group. “We will need more than ten minutes, Artoo. I’ve found the slaves.”

Han and Dameron hung their heads in shame.

Obi-Wan’s sadness hummed strongly. The man rubbed his face before focusing on Vader. “I’ll help you evacuate. Han and Kes can stay here protecting Artoo as he gets to work.” Obi-Wan turned to look at the others. “Twenty minutes. Contact me on my commlink if there is any issue. If you hear something from Chewbacca.”

Han nodded. “Will do.” He and Kes stood guard by the door as Artoo went to work, hacking into and overriding the system.

Vader and Obi-Wan split from the rest of the group, carefully making their way towards the slaves hidden within the weapons factory.

Vader’s stomach dropped. “How badly?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “Very little physically. He left himself open when they were practice
dueling. Repeatedly. Rey burned his side. His ribs. Like you did to her apparently.” A pause. “She
mostly just hurt his pride.”

Vader nodded slowly as they made their way around a corner and down another hallway leading
towards the slaves locked up. “That is not what’s bothering you though. You seem...off.” He
hesitated. “Tired.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I felt a surge in the Force. A brush of coldness — if only for a second or two.
When the two of them were practicing. Rey said she felt invincible; like she could prevent herself
from being hurt again.”

“Power. She felt the power of the Force.” Vader’s stomach was churning. “Of the dark side. Used
her anger at being betrayed by those that were supposed to help her, to attack Luke.”

Obi-Wan nodded. They had just reached the doors hiding the slaves.

Vader stopped to watch Kenobi closely. They needed to have a sit down and chat. This wasn’t the
place to do it. He could see Obi-Wan come to the same conclusion.

Cackling on Obi-Wan’s commlink.

“What is it?”

“Chewy spotted an Imperial ship drop out of hyperspace. A big one. He’s moving the Falcon to the
secondary pick up point.” Han filled him in. “We will have to escape through the trash field. Artoo
just overrode everything. He said fifteen minutes maximum is the best he could do.”
Vader grimaced. *Yuck.*

He wouldn’t be able to leave with the people held captive. Staying behind in the factory was a huge risk for him. He could be killed in the resulting explosion. Killed by the raiding party as they took the factory.

He quirked his helmet at Obi-Wan. He needed a ride out of here. He needed to flee with the rebels.

Obi-Wan nodded. “We will meet you at the Falcon. See you in ten.”

The two of them opened the heavy doors.

Vader’s heart stopped. Inside the damp, dark room were dozens of beings shrinking away from the bright light of the hallway.

“It’s alright,” Kenobi said cautiously. Comfortingly. “We’re here to rescue you. You’re safe…but we must leave now.” He began opening the cage everyone was locked in.

Vader blinked. Flashes of a long forgotten memory of him and his mother locked away in a shipping container with dozens of others. Like cargo. Like junk.

Smuggled like spice.

He was a monster.

He allowed this to happen. To continue after everything he promised his mother.

His shame was overwhelming. He tried to hide it away from Kenobi. From everyone around him. He was a fool. An idiot.

He had hoped that Rey was wrong. Mistaken.
He blinked some more. Rebuilt his crumbling walls. His shields.

A voice murmuring closely. “I need you to listen to me Anakin. We need to get out of here. Now.” Obi-Wan was speaking to him quietly. Easily picking up on Vader’s shame. “We need to move. Transport vessels have landed. The factory is being searched.” A short pause. “We need to get out of here.”

Vader gave Kenobi a curt nod. He strengthened his shields even more. Placing the finishing touches on the walls within his mind. He needed to focus. They needed to complete the mission. “I’ll cover the rear. You lead.”

Quickly they rounded up the beings.

“We have a ship waiting for us near the trash field,” Obi-Wan began explaining to those being rescued. “We will take everyone somewhere safe. Somewhere to heal. But we must hurry.”

They began moving quicker.

Vader once again opened himself up in the Force. He needed to figure out where everyone was. Where the threats were. How quickly they were moving towards them.

He could feel movement coming towards them. Twenty or thirty soldiers. Quickly and efficiently working their way through the factory.

They needed to push. They needed to move.

Kenobi began trotting down the hallway. He had felt it too. The Imperial Forces were much closer than anyone wanted.

Vader palmed his lightsaber hilt in one hand as he too began to trot behind everyone. The last prisoner, a small togruta girl, ran by an intersection in the hallway. Squealing as a blaster bolt zoomed by her head.

Vader ignited his lightsaber and slid to a stop at the intersection. A bolt or two flashed by his
helmet. He deflected another three with his lightsaber. Waiting for the opportune moment.

A large number of troopers faced him. Vader raised his left hand and pulled down the ceiling and floor above, onto the Imperial soldiers.

The creaking and groaning of the building threatening to collapse around them.

They needed to run. They needed to flee.

The togruta that had been shot at was waiting for Vader. Small. A child no older than nine or ten. Her short legs slowing her down.

Vader grabbed the girl in his left arm and began running through the trash field. The factory was going to blow any minute.

Crying. Tears. Fear.

Still Vader ran as fast as he could. Cursing his heavy, poorly fitted cybernetics with every step.

He spotted the ship waiting for the last of the prisoners. Obi-Wan standing on the end of the ramp, ushering everyone inside.

Blaster fire screamed by Vader’s head. His ears ringing. The togruta screaming.

Obi-Wan returned fire. Hitting the soldier who was firing at the rebels.

Vader hobbled up the ramp. His thighs burning and chafing. Lungs aching. He set the girl in his arms down, before turning to search for Kenobi. Making sure he had come up the ramp as well.

Obi-Wan slapped the ramp closed. “We’re all here! Let’s go!”
“Hang onto something!” Han yelled out from within the cockpit. “We got company!”

A Wookiee yelled out something as well. Vader wasn’t sure what he had said.

“Kenobi, man the guns! Kes is on the starboard side!”

Obi-Wan ran to the other gunner down the hallway. Away from Vader.

The *Millenium Falcon* took off from the factory.

Vader stayed standing in the seating area with the numerous slaves they had rescued from certain death. The slaves — the *people* — were watching him closely. Curiously. And fearfully.

Some were sitting on the numerous couches and chairs. Others sat down on the floor. They were all looking at him. Staring.

“Oh deary me! This is not what I was programmed for!” A familiar voice complained loudly behind him.

Bleeping and whirring in response as Vader slowly turned towards the voice.

Threepio halted abruptly as he spotted Vader standing before him. “Uh,” his voice quivered as he raised his golden arms in surrender.

Artoo bumped into the other droid’s legs. He bleeped and whirred some more.

“Working together!” Threepio voiced his shock. “I must sit down. I cannot handle this!”

The Falcon swayed and tilted. Banking to the left sharply as the group fled the industrial moon. Threepio lost his footing, clutching onto Artoo as he tumbled to the floor.
Artoo chortled in laughter at the protocol droid.

Vader blinked. He understood now. Why the droids — these droids — were here. For him to remember his life before he chose the dark side. Before he knelt to Darth Sidious. Before he became the monster.

He shook his head. He didn’t want to deal with it. Not here. Not now.

Vader looked down to the floor, carefully stepping around everyone. He made his way into the cockpit. He wanted to see the Imperial Navy. Identify who got the call.

A massive vessel was ahead of them. Huge. He had never seen one that large before. The Executor. That’s what Rey had called it. It was the Star Dreadnought. It was supposed to be his.

“That’s a big ship,” Han said to Vader as the Wookiee plugged in the hyperspace coordinates.

“It is,” Vader agreed. “It’s supposed to be mine.”

Han shrugged as he dodged some TIE Fighters. “Nothing wrong with an older ship. Makes people disregard you. Write you off as not being a threat.” The Falcon jumped into hyperspace. “Their mistake.”

Vader looked down at his future son-in-law. The man had a point. He gave him a curt nod of his head. “That is true.”

Obi-Wan came cautiously into the cockpit. “The factory blew just before we jumped to hyperspace.”

Chewbacca roared out in celebration. Pleased at the success of the mission.

Vader was as well, he realized. Pleased. But also confused. Like it was wrong to feel this way.

“How about we find somewhere private to sit and have a chat?” Obi-Wan said quietly to him.
Han nodded. “It’ll be a couple of hours before we reach the rendezvous point. We need to take a few jumps to make sure we aren’t followed.”

Vader nodded once more, gesturing for Obi-Wan to lead the way.

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“How soon do you think you’ll need higher quality bacta and cybernetics?” Obi-Wan asked Vader, non-insultingly.

Vader looked down at the table. “Soon. I believe I can talk my way out of this failure.” He paused, thinking. “I’m not sure if I can talk my way out of another.”

Obi-Wan nodded sadly. “You will be tortured for this failure. Force lightning.”

Vader felt uneasy. Uncertain. “Likely.” He looked at his former Master. “I can handle it. I’ve dealt with it before.” He didn’t want to seem weak.

Obi-Wan closed his eyes and pinched the bridge of his nose. He huffed. “You shouldn’t have to deal with it. You shouldn’t. It’s wrong.”

Vader shrugged. It was what he deserved. It wasn’t anything new. Failure led to punishment. Always.

Obi-Wan sighed. His frustration and sadness humming strongly around Vader. Around the little kitchenette of the vessel.

Vader focused on his gloves. Thinking of the question he didn’t want to ask. He didn’t want to know. But he knew it was important. Vital. “Rey?” Obi-Wan nodded. “What did you tell her after she hurt Luke?”

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “I said that she was still unfamiliar with the Force. Using it. I said that
she and Luke were uncertain how to harness it properly. That it would take years of training and learning.” A pause. “That it wasn’t something she should worry about.” Obi-Wan sighed. “I just told her I felt a surge of power in the Force. I didn’t mention the coldness that went along with it. I know that everyone has light and dark inside them. I lectured Rey a few days earlier on the topic. I told her that it was important that we learn to control our anger, rather than letting our anger control us. Emotions are what make us people. They are not forbidden. Understanding and analyzing why we feel a certain emotion is important. It helps us better understand ourselves. Which, in turn, leads to better control of one’s emotions.” Obi-Wan frowned, lost in thought. “It took me close to twenty years hiding on Tatooine to figure out how to explain that that was what letting go meant.”

Vader closed his eyes. It was good advice. Better than what he was taught by everyone in the temple. “But her drive to survive — her fight to protect herself — it’s affecting her training. I think she just needs to be reminded that her emotions shouldn’t control her. Repeatedly. Repetition leads to understanding. Eventually. You can take Rey out of Jakku, but you cannot take the Jakku out of Rey. At least, not right away. It will take time.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I don’t — I really don’t want to mess her up too.” Quiet. Ashamed.

Vader quirked his head at the man sitting across from him. “You didn’t mess up with me. I made my choice — as stupid and as wrong as it was. It was my choice. Not yours.” He shook his head. “You didn’t make me, Obi-Wan. I did. It was a long time coming, I think.”

“No.” Disbelief evident.

Vader nodded. “Yes. Did Owen or Beru ever tell you what I did when I went to rescue my mother from the Tusken Raiders?”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “Owen told me to leave them alone. There was no place there for me to catch up with them. To compare notes, so to speak. He hated me. Hated the Jedi. I couldn’t blame him for his...hate, so I never pushed.”

“I slaughtered the entire village — women, children, men — everyone, because they held my mother captive.” Blunt and to the point. “Because she died in my arms. I was too late to rescue her. By mere minutes.” Vader thought back to that time, long ago. A lifetime ago. “I tapped into the dark side to kill everyone there. I don’t remember much. I think I...blacked out. Split. Disassociated. I used my hate, my anger, to slaughter everyone.” Vader gestured to Obi-Wan. “Owen figured that out. He knew I killed everyone when I returned to the homestead with my dead mother strapped to the speeder. That was why he hated the Jedi. He hated me for what I did. He didn’t know any better to think anything else. To think that I went beyond the scope of what a Jedi did.”
Obi-Wan was silent. Shocked.

“Looking back...it highly likely that Palpatine had something to do with my mother’s abduction. With my nightmares. My visions.” Vader looked down at his hands in front of him. “Same with my visions of Padmé.” He focused once more on Kenobi.

Obi-Wan looked at him with wide eyes. Still silent.

“Has Ahsoka told you of when she was my Padawan...when she would stop me from Force choking...enemies to get them to talk?”

Obi-Wan paled, shaking his head. “No.”

Vader gestured at Obi-Wan. “What I am trying to tell you, is that my fall didn’t happen overnight. It was a long time coming. If anything, you prevented me from falling earlier than I did.”

He let that sink in. Obi-Wan needed to hear it. He needed to be certain with what he was doing with Rey and Luke. He needed confidence.

“What do you suggest I do with Luke and Rey? And Leia?” Obi-Wan asked him quietly. “Are exceptionally strong shields enough for her?”

Vader was silent for a moment. His respirator forcing him to breathe. He pondered Kenobi’s questions. Thinking carefully. “Luke and Rey need to be treated as individuals. Luke grew up on Tatooine — free, but still surrounded by slavery. Rey was sold when she was six years old by her parents. Those factors will always affect them. Those experiences. To tell them that they need to move on from that, won’t work.” Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. “Rey will always fight aggressively — it is how she survived on Jakku. Luke may have been sheltered by Owen and Beru, but he is not naive. He’s seen too much.” Vader paused, thinking about what he wanted to tell Obi-Wan. “If you can get them to use their experiences positively, that would be ideal.” He shrugged. “I don’t know how you would do that. But…” he shrugged once more.

“And Leia?”
“Why doesn’t she wish to learn about the Force?” Vader asked him in response. “She didn’t learn about it in Rey’s timeline either. There must be a reason.”

Vader watched as Obi-Wan smiled dryly at the table between them. It wasn’t a happy smile, or an amused one. It was more of a grimace.

“Rey mentioned that her General didn’t learn about the Force — refused to learn about the Force — because of you.” Obi-Wan met Vader’s gaze. “Rey said that Leia saw you in herself. That she saw Vader in herself.” He blew out a long breath. “Considering General Organa led the Resistance against the First Order, considering she’d do anything to get her son back, I don’t believe her self-assessment to be too far off.” Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “As for this Leia, I’m not entirely certain. Perhaps she doesn’t trust herself. With the...power and responsibility that wielding the Force brings.” He shrugged. “She’s a princess and a politician — it is a lot of responsibility already.”

“Does she have a lot of anger? Like me? Like I did at her age?”

Obi-Wan chuckled, nodding. “And a sharp tongue, too. She’s very similar to you. Luke, on the other hand, is very similar to Padmé in terms of personality.”

Vader nodded. It was nice to hear about his children. About who they were as people. As individuals. He thought back to Obi-Wan’s original question. “I don’t know what to do about Leia,” he admitted quietly. He didn’t know how to be a parent. How to be a father. “What do Bail and Breha say?”

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. Frowning. “They wish for her to stay out of the action. They’ve conceded with her shadowing Mothma. Leia likes to know what is going on. She likes to see how things are run; how decisions are made.” He sighed. “I think she likes what she’s doing now. She is able to learn more about Luke. They spend plenty of time together. She respects Rey. A lot.” Obi-Wan winced. “Luke and Leia know the circumstances of Rey arriving here.”

“Her time travel?” Vader was surprised.

Obi-Wan nodded. “Rey said it was important that they knew. Especially after her and Luke’s practice duel. Leia called her out on her lightsaber. On it being identical to Luke’s.”

Vader nodded. Leia was smart like her mother. He allowed himself a small grin.
Silence ensued. Vader was tired. He needed a rest, but he knew he wouldn’t be getting one for some time. He needed to travel to Naboo, drop off their precious cargo. It was far too risky for the Rebels to travel to the Mid-Rim planet. It was up to Vader and his crew to finish the mission. Something, he knew, his crew was looking forward to. A mission. A goal.

He also needed to get in touch with Sidious. He didn’t know what he would say to him. What excuse he would give him this time. Perhaps he could argue that he had spotted Kenobi and focused on hunting him down. Stole a ship to track them. He shrugged to himself. It would have to do.

“Did you want to talk about what you felt on Cymoon-1?”

Obi-Wan brought him back to the present. Vader frowned to himself. What he felt?

He grimaced to himself. His shame at finding the slaves. That was what Obi-Wan wanted to talk about. He shook his head. “Not particularly.”

Relief hummed around the room. Obi-Wan was venturing out of his comfort zone. A Jedi Knight wanting to talk about feelings.

Vader held back a chuckle. “I can speak with Rey if I need to. If it hits me hard. I’m alright for now.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “You two are close.”

Vader felt self-conscious. Worried that Obi-Wan wouldn’t approve of the...relationship that they had as Master and Padawan. “Yes. I respect her.”

Obi-Wan nodded in understanding. “That’s good. That’s a good thing.” Approval hummed strongly from the Jedi.

“I thought you told me to not get attached.” Vader quirked his head. “I can assure you, I very much am. As is Rey. Our strange bond has seen to that.”
Obi-Wan shrugged. “Perhaps not all attachment is bad. Perhaps when it’s healthy and not a secret it’s a good thing.”

Vader looked down at his gloved hands on the table. “Padmé insisted we kept our relationship a secret. Our marriage. It would’ve derailed her career in the Senate.” He shrugged. “Mine too. But, I was willing to walk away from it all. For her. I could’ve become a mechanic or something. Fix up old starships.” Memories flashed through his mind. “There was never enough time for me to...think. To think things through. To make a decision. And then after eight months of no contact with her, I find out she’s pregnant. And then it all went to shit.”

Silence. Painful memories.

“I’m sorry you didn’t trust me enough to tell me. That you felt you needed to keep it all a secret from me.” Obi-Wan said quietly. “That you and Padmé felt it necessary to marry in secret.”

Vader nodded. “No one else was there. Just the man who married us. Threepio and Artoo as well. I think Artoo has a recording of it.”

Surprise hummed strongly around the men. “I’ll ask him to show me later in private.”


Obi-Wan winced. “He’s had his memories wiped. To protect Leia. He’s a bit too high strung to keep it all a secret.”

Vader nodded. It made sense. A small flaw on the droid he created when he was just a boy.

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“Attention unidentified vessel. Please state your call sign. Our guns are locked and loaded, and ready to fire.”

Vader shook his head, grinning as he picked up the radio transceiver. “This is Lord Vader with the
approved package. Looking for a safe place to land to unload.”

“Understood Lord Vader,” Montferrat came on the radio transmission. “Hangar One is safe for unloading. I will meet you there. Healers are on standby.”

“Understood.” Vader handed the transceiver back to Chewbacca as Han cautiously flew the Falcon closer to the Devastator.

“Never thought I’d willingly fly my ship into a Star Destroyer,” Han muttered under his breath.

Vader grinned. “Never thought I’d willingly work with the Rebellion.”

Han snorted. “You and me both.”

The Falcon carefully touched down in the appropriate hangar. The vessel began to unload.

Vader and Obi-Wan walked towards Montferrat waiting for them off to the side.

Healers had rushed in to help the sick and weak. The newly freed slaves would get the appropriate care before being dropped off on Naboo.

“Thank you Mister Vader,” the little togruta girl called out as the healers walked her towards the medical facilities of the Destroyer.

Vader quirked his head at the girl. He couldn’t help but grin. Thankful for his mask for once. This was what he should’ve been doing a long time ago. This was what he wanted.

To free the slaves.

“Lord Vader,” Montferrat cut in quietly after he greeted both him and Obi-Wan, “the Emperor has been looking for you. He mentioned that no one could find you. He seemed worried. Uncertain. The loss of the factory has apparently shaken him up.”
Vader gave him a curt nod. “I will speak with him shortly in my quarters.”

“What’s your plan?” Obi-Wan crossed his arms across his chest.

Vader grimaced. “I’ve been given orders to hunt you and Ahsoka down. I can say that I spotted you fleeing and followed in an unfinished ship.” He shrugged. “Had no radio to check in with anyone. Lost contact with you. Too many hyperspace jumps.”

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “I can work with that, in case anyone asks.”

“Contingency plans,” Vader nodded in understanding. Sidious liked his spies. He looked towards the Falcon, it’s ramp down, waiting for Obi-Wan to return. “You should go Obi-Wan, before anyone here notices just who you are.”

His former Master nodded slowly.

“I’ll let you know when we reach Naboo,” Vader assured him. “I’m sure the Queen will as well.”

Obi-Wan grinned, shrugging. “Now why would she do that? Naboo is part of the Empire.” He made his way back towards the Falcon. “Keep me abreast on what the Emperor says and does, please. Our mutual contact needs to know what is going on.”

Vader gave him a curt nod. He watched as the Corellian freighter began preparing to leave the hangar. He gave the signal to the control tower to allow them clearance to leave.

Vader closed his eyes as the *Millenium Falcon* left the hangar and jumped into hyperspace. He felt...good. Like he had done the right thing. Finally.

The Force hummed in agreement.

“Will this be a regular occurrence Lord Vader?” Montferrat brought him out of his thoughts.
Vader turned to look at his second in command. “I believe so. It feels right.”

A curt nod from Jhared. “It was a greater amount of...slaves than I realized,” he admitted quietly as the pair of them made their way towards the lifts.

Vader gave him a nod in agreement. “I must check in with the Emperor.”

“Of course Lord Vader.” Montferrat gestured for him to enter into the turbo lift.

The lift doors closed, leaving Vader alone with his thoughts. He began strengthening his shields. He needed to prepare for Sidious. He had no idea just what he’d be walking into.

His treason needed to remain hidden from his Master. It would undoubtedly cost him his life if it were to be found out.

He couldn’t let that happen. He’d couldn’t disappoint his children, Luke and Leia. He couldn’t disappoint Rey.

He wouldn’t.

The lift doors slowly opened, allowing Vader to exit and meet whatever Sidious had planned for him.
“Just relax and try to open yourself up, Rey,” Ahsoka said quietly. Squeezing her hands in affirmation. “Reach out and feel the Force all around us. Feel it inside you.” A pause. A breath. “Can you describe it?”

Rey nodded timidly. Uncertain. “It’s...it’s very overwhelming.” She could feel herself floating slightly, cross-legged, an inch or two above her pillow on the stone floor. “There’s so much that’s alive here.” She sighed. “I can see...everything connected to each other. All the living things. It’s all connected.”

Ahsoka hummed, squeezing Rey’s hands once more. “Is it like...rivers for you? Rivers and streams connecting everything together?”

Rey shook her head. Her eyebrows scrunched together. “No...but yes. It’s more like...a river running through a lake.” Rey grimaced. “Does that — does that make sense?”

“I think so...can you describe it to me?”

Rey focused once more on everything around her. “It’s like...there is a bright river that connects and highlights everything. That bright river is moving through a lake. The lake isn’t as bright...but it’s still there. It’s brighter than the non-living things.”

Ahsoka hummed once more before she tugged lightly on Rey’s hands. “Well...you see the Force differently than I do...it’s interesting for sure.” A pause. “Do you want to pull out of your meditation...or are you alright for a few more minutes?”

Rey sighed. “I’d like to stay a bit longer.” She found it peaceful. Meditation. Seeing how everything was all connected together calmed her down. Relaxed her. She exhaled deeply. Feeling as though her anxiety and anger were slowly beginning to ooze out of her and into the Force.

*There is no emotion, there is peace.* Rey sighed. This was peace. This was what it felt like.

A spark in the Force caught her attention. A bright hum of something nearby. Rey opened herself up more in the Force and began searching for the anomaly. The river had a bright area. Brighter than anything around it. It looked like a tangle of rope, or possibly ripples of water traveling over
boulders. She focused on the spot. Searching, searching. Trying to understand why the blob was so bright.

She exhaled slowly. Deeply. Investigating.

The tangle moved. Wrapping around another tangle. It felt...intense. Overwhelming.

The tangle moved again, like a leg hooking around another leg. Another body.

“Oh!” Rey pulled back sharply. She hurriedly pulled out of her meditation and plopped down on her pillow. She blinked her eyes open in shame. Grimacing at Ahsoka sitting in front of her who was watching her with a confused expression.

“What happened?” She asked. “What’s wrong?”

Rey hid her cheeks behind the palms of her hands. “Sex.” A mumble. Barely audible.

Ahsoka roared with laughter. Slapping her thigh with a hand.

Rey blushed profusely. Embarrassed at her lack of discretion. She had invaded someone’s privacy. Two people’s privacy. It was wrong of her to do that.

She noticed Obi-Wan making his way closer to the pair of them. He had finished his meeting with Mothma and the others. Filled them in on Cymoon-1.

Ahsoka twisted her head and body around to look at the Jedi approaching. “So...it wasn’t you getting lucky I assume?”

Obi-Wan raised a brow in question. Not understanding what Ahsoka was talking about. “I’m sorry?” He sat down perpendicular to Rey and Ahsoka.

Rey shook her head and curled up to hide. Her face pressing into her knees as she wrapped her arms around her legs. Trying desperately to make herself as small as possible.
“Rey accidentally saw someone...well...a couple someone’s bumping uglies.” Ahsoka cheerfully informed the Jedi Knight. At Obi-Wan’s continued look of confusion, she sighed. “Sex Obi-Wan! Rey saw two people having sex when she was meditating.”

“Bumping uglies?” Obi-Wan questioned the togruta. “How old are you again?”

“Hey!” Ahsoka scoffed. Pouting.

Rey snickered.

Reassurance hummed around her strongly. It was coming from Obi-Wan. He was trying to ease her embarrassment. Rey sighed before peeking out from behind her knees. “It was wrong for me to intrude. I shouldn’t have done that.”

“What caused you to...look closer?”

Rey rubbed her cheeks before sitting cross-legged once more. “It was...brighter. I was curious. I wanted to see why.”

Obi-Wan grinned, his eyes crinkling in amusement. “I’d...recommend not looking closer when in close proximity to everyone here. Emotions tend to run rampant in close quarters.” He gestured vaguely around the base.

Rey nodded.

The silence between the trio was broken by Ahsoka yawning loudly. “Mission went well?”

Obi-Wan hummed in confirmation. “So far. It’s not completed yet.” He waved the door to the room set aside for the Force sensitives closed. “I’m waiting to hear from Anakin. Mothma is waiting to hear from Naboo.”

“How long will it take to hear from him?”
Obi-Wan shrugged before focusing on Rey. He gave her a sad smile. “The...slaves were not in the best of shape. Anakin said that the healers on his Destroyer would make sure they were healed as best as they could be before making the trip to Naboo.” He sighed. “Less of a burden on Naboo. On their medical facilities.” A pause. “I think soon...his vessel has a high number of healers on board. There were about a dozen from what I could see.”

Rey nodded slowly.

“I’ve also asked him to tell us what Palpatine is doing. What he’s saying.” Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “I’m hoping that if he talks more about what Palpatine is doing he’ll get more comfortable talking about how Palpatine has treated him. Anakin seems to believe that...Force lightning is an acceptable punishment for failure. He thinks he deserves it.”

Rey sniffed before rubbing at a watery eye. Master and slave. He was moulded to believe it was acceptable. She nodded sadly, focusing on a bit of fluff on her pillow. She ran the tips of her fingers through the material.

“I hope that if he talks to us — to myself, or Rey — that maybe he will begin to see and understand that it is wrong. That that sort of punishment is wrong.” Obi-Wan frowned. “But nineteen years of experiencing that is a lot to deal with.”

“Forty-two years,” Rey said quietly.

“What?” Ahsoka and Obi-Wan both questioned.

“Forty-two years.” Rey met the gaze of Obi-Wan. “He grew up on Tatooine. He was a slave. He was punished. Sometimes severely.” She scoffed at him. “The Jedi Order never dealt with that. Instead they used his ability to fight back to fight for them. A child soldier. And when he reacted in a way that was frowned upon by the wise Jedi, they shamed him and distrusted him instead of helping him. Repeatedly.” She gestured to the pair of Force sensitives watching her in shock. “So we don’t have nineteen years of baggage to deal with. We have forty-two years, because that’s his age.”

Silence.

Rey wrapped her arms around herself. Her sense of peace had escaped her. She frowned to herself.
Huffing. Her frustration and anger were both humming strongly.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat quietly. “Forty-two years,” he agreed.

Rey could feel him watching her. Examining her. She refused to look at him. Instead looking to the floor. Focusing on anywhere but the two other people in the room with her.

“So...you’re angry — and rightfully so, I might add — from the way the Order treated Anakin,” Obi-Wan prompted.

Rey nodded.

“And you are angry at the Jedi for not being there for Anakin, for not helping him heal from his experiences growing up on Tatooine.” Obi-Wan continued. “Because we had a responsibility. We had custody of Anakin. And we made him into a soldier. When he was only a boy.”

Rey nodded once more.

“What have I missed?” Obi-Wan questioned Rey. “Surely there is something else that I’ve forgotten.”

Rey huffed, frowning at the floor. “You disregarded his feelings, his emotions, and tried to mould him into the perfect Jedi Knight. Just like Sidious has moulded him into a Sith.” She sniffed. “He hasn’t been given the opportunity to think for himself. Not really.”

“He needs time to think about what he wants. His own choice. His own decision.” Obi-Wan hummed. “He needs to have his own agency.”

Rey sniffed again. She wiped her nose with the back of her hand. “Yes.”

“So, what solutions have you come to?” Obi-Wan asked her quietly. “How can we help Anakin get to a point to be able to make his own decisions? How can we use your anger at how he was — is — treated into something constructive? Into something positive?”
Rey frowned.

Obi-Wan raised his eyebrows as he waited for her answer. “How can we use your anger, about how you were treated growing up, positively? Constructively?”

Shrinking in on herself, Rey thought about what Obi-Wan was asking her. She had never used her anger positively before. Only destructively — defending herself against someone stronger. Hurting them — or killing them — so they’d leave her alone. Tearing apart crashed starships as she waited for her mother and father to return. “I don’t think I’ve ever done that before. I dunno.”

The Jedi Knight nodded at her. “Perhaps not, but there must be a few ideas that you have. Ideas that might work. We won’t know until we try them.”

“I just want to find a sense of belonging. Someone who cares. Someone to show me my place in all this.” Rey shrugged her shoulders. She looked down at her hands in her lap. “I have no idea how that will fix my anger about my childhood. About Master Vader’s...life. I just — that’s just what I want. I want peace.” She scratched her thigh. “Balance.”

Ahsoka reached a hand towards Rey and gave one of hers a squeeze. “Well...I think we can all work together to find that peace. To find the balance. Perhaps that will be our end goal: peace and balance.”

Rey nodded jerkily. Sniffed some more. She felt grumpy. Grumpy and tired — a far difference from the peaceful feeling she had when she was meditating.

“Perhaps we can get you in the training facility that’s just been set up.” Obi-Wan recommended. “We can find a way for you to burn off your anger at the same time as you are strengthening up to better control the Force.” He gave Rey a kind, warm smile. “Small steps, but they are still steps forward.”

Rey nodded once more. “Alright.” She grimaced. “I’m sorry for comparing the Jedi Order to Palpatine — that was uncalled for and unfair to you.” She zeroed in on Obi-Wan.

The Jedi Knight shook his head. “You’re not wrong in your criticisms, Rey. I’ve thought long and hard about the Order’s weaknesses. I’ve spent twenty years going over each and every one of them with a fine-tooth comb.” He gave her a grin. “There’s no need to apologize.”
Obi-Wan held up a hand to stop her. “If you didn’t voice your criticisms I would be worried. It is healthy to speak about your emotions. Your thoughts and your feelings.”

Rey watched Obi-Wan with wide eyes. She didn’t know what to say. How to respond. She gave him a little nod of her head.

“Other than your curiosity during your meditation, how did it feel for you?” He queried kindly.

Rey sighed. “It felt nice. Peaceful. I like being able to see that things are all connected together. It’s relaxing to see it. To see that I’m a part of that in some way.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. “The rivers and streams?”

Rey hummed. “And lakes.”

She watched as Obi-Wan frowned.

“Lakes?”

“The rivers and streams are traveling though lakes.” Rey shrugged. “They are brighter and more noticeable, but the lakes are there as well. Just not as bright; they’re more muted.”

Silence.

“Oceans…” Obi-Wan murmured to himself. He closed his eyes, sighing. “Anakin could see oceans he said...when he was a boy. I had never heard of that before.” He focused once more on Rey. “I only see rivers and streams...I don’t see the lakes or oceans. I asked Yoda...when I had Anakin as my Padawan...he said that it was the dark side that he was seeing. That it was because he was so old when he came to the temple.” He pinched the bridge of his nose.
Rey frowned. That didn’t seem right. Yoda was wrong. Mistaken. “It didn’t feel dark to me. Like the dark side. It didn’t feel like Mustafar or when I first arrived on the *Devastator*...with Vader. When he knocked me on my ass. That was...cold, and oily, and dark. It was terrifying.” She searched for the right word. The right description. “It honestly felt like...balance. Like peace. I don’t — I don’t know how else I would describe it.”

Obi-Wan nodded sadly. “Alright.” He gave her a watery grin.

Ahsoka cleared her throat. “Maybe it’s due to your midichlorian count. Maybe you have a ridiculously high count to be able to see the lakes and oceans.”

Obi-Wan raised his eyebrows as he nodded his agreement. “Perhaps.”

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Rey yawned as she began rebuilding one of the T-47 airspeeders. Mothma had asked if they could prepare a handful of airspeeders for a swamp environment. For somewhere far damper than they currently were. The fact that they were on D’Qar during the rainy season only aided them. It was the ideal environment to be in for testing, having plenty of swamps appear nearby over the last few weeks.

Rey grunted as she grabbed hold of the wing and hoisted herself up on top of the vessel. Her toolkit came next as she reached a hand out to receive it. Grabbing a wrench, she began to remove the cover for the repulsor drive unit. She and Jan — the head mechanic with the rebellion — believed they had figured out a way to adjust the drive to allow the speeder a way to fly both in the atmosphere, but also underwater.

*Hopefully.*

It was a finicky thing to do. One wrong move and the speeder wouldn’t be able to fly at all. It would be rendered useless except for parts.

Rey exhaled slowly as she peeled off the cover and set down her wrench. She reached her hand into the unit and began feeling around for the adjustment switch. It was in an awkward position on the T-47s. Master Vader’s thoughts on the vessel’s were running through her mind. *Cheap garbage. Poorly designed. Unsafe. Pathetic.*
She rolled her eyes to herself — she should’ve never told Vader what she was working on. His disdain for the speeders was almost unbearable. So much so that she purposely failed to mention that Luke regularly flew his own T-47 around during his patrol of the base.

Rey sighed as she found the little lever. Master Vader had a point about the poor design — it was difficult for her to reach. Awkward. She stuck her tongue out as she carefully lowered the lever, before giving it a twist with the tips of her fingers. Locking it into place.

That was the first step. Next she needed to adjust the heat dispersion fins. The speeder needed to be able to move quickly through water and also through air. She needed to find the appropriate compromise where the speeder could do both. That part had both Rey and Jan stumped — neither of them had any idea how to make the fins suitable for different environments. Only one or the other.

Replacing the cover for the repulsor drive unit, Rey hopped off of the speeder. She made her way to the rear of the vessel to take a look at the dispersion fins. She quirked her head at what she was seeing.

She didn’t know where to start. How to adjust them.

It was beyond her capabilities.

“What are you looking at?”

Rey jerked in shock, bringing her hands to her chest as if to slow down her racing heart. She hadn’t heard the bond open. It had been two weeks since Cymoon-1 and they had yet to speak to each other through their bond. Master Vader had reinforced his shields extremely well for his meeting with the Emperor.

She turned her head slightly, taking in Vader who was standing close behind her. “The heat dispersion fins,” she whispered. Well aware she was tinkering on a vessel in the middle of the night. She didn’t want anyone to overhear her speaking. “I need to adjust them to allow the speeders to fly in air and water.” She shrugged. “I’m not sure what to do. I’ve never rebuilt something like this before. I’ve never needed to create something to function in two entirely different environments.”

She turned to look at Vader entirely. “You have any suggestions?”
Vader quirked his helmet before crossing his arms across his chest. Across his life support unit. “I think you’ll have to compromise. The T-47’s won’t be functioning at one hundred percent capabilities in either environment.”

Rey shook her head in agreement. “It’s what Mothma wants. We need to be able to fly them in different environments. It broadens the potential locations we could set up base.” She scratched her chin. “It’s been done before.”

“Your past?” Curiosity hummed strongly from Vader.

Rey nodded. “It took a bit of time, but the technicians and mechanics rebuilt the airspeeders for a number of different environments. The tricky part is figuring out a way to keep them functioning as airspeeders as well.” She frowned. “I know that they can be made into snow speeders, swamp speeders and sand speeders. But, I also know that that is what they became permanently.”

“Which puts you at risk for running out of appropriate vessels to keep a watch on your base,” Vader supplied in understanding. “You would be limited with where you could flee to if you changed a majority of them to snow speeders, for example.”

Rey nodded.

Silence for a few moments as both Vader and Rey thought of a possible solution. She could feel Vader’s mind whirring. Thinking hard about the problem.

“I think you’ll need a manual override to extend the dispersion fins. A lever or switch in the cockpit.”

“Connect the override to the fins and the pilot can flip the switch to extend them as they dive into the water. Or flip it back to fly in the atmosphere.” Rey grinned at her Master. “No compromise.”

“You’ll need to figure out a way to lengthen the fins that are already in place. Weld extensions onto each fin. Perhaps there is a way to hide them in the rear of the vessel.” Vader shrugged. “Slots that each fin can slide into or out of with a flick of the switch.”
Rey nodded in understanding. It was somewhat complex, but it would prevent the speeders from losing their speed and maneuverability. “Thank you,” she murmured quietly.

“It’s no problem.” Vader waved off her thanks.

Rey grinned at him. “What’s going on with you? Any news?”

Vader nodded. “I’m on Coruscant right now...in my place. Sidious called an emergency meeting. The destruction of the weapons factory has shaken him — although he’d never admit it.” He gestured to Rey. “I found out who the commander of the Executor is — Cassio Tagge. He argued that the Death Star had flaws and brought it to the attention of Sidious. Just too late to actually do anything. Since its destruction, he has been kissing ass.”

“And he got a fancy new ship as a reward,” Rey finished quietly.

“Indeed.” Vader’s annoyance was wafting hard against Rey’s shields.

“If it makes you feel any better — that ship crashed into the second Death Star. It only lasted a few years before it was destroyed completely,” Rey murmured. She could feel Vader’s sneer behind his mask.

“Idiotic pilots.”

Rey shrugged. “I don’t exactly know what happened...or why. I just know that it crashed during the battle.”

Vader gave her a nod of his head.

“How’re you?” She asked him quietly.

“Fine.”

Rey raised a brow at his curt response. “Alright.” Silence for a moment while she thought of
something else to say. “I’ve been meditating more. I’m getting more comfortable with it.”

Intrigue hummed around her. Vader liked it when she spoke of her training. “Are you seeing more?”

Rey nodded. “Rivers and streams and lakes.” She sniffed. “Obi-Wan said you described them as oceans.”

Vader nodded. “Yoda said I was seeing the dark side of the Force. Told me I was...unfit to see anything the Jedi way.”

“Because of your age.”

Vader nodded once more.

Rey rolled her eyes. “Ahsoka said it may be because of my midichlorian counts. That perhaps Yoda couldn’t see the lakes because his counts weren’t high enough to notice them.” She shrugged. “I poked around for a bit in the lakes...they didn’t feel dark. At all. To me it felt calm and peaceful. It felt like balance.”

Silence for a few moments as Master and Padawan took each other in.

“When are you going to see Yoda?” Vader questioned her, breaking the silence.

Rey shrugged. “Obi-Wan keeps saying soon. I don’t think he actually wants to, so he finds any excuse he can to postpone it. He’s currently helping Mothma with future plans. Current rebellion attacks against the Empire. Those sorts of things.”

Vader nodded in understanding. The rebellion was continuing to push hard against the Empire.

She frowned before continuing. “I think he is angry at him...but then he feels guilty about it. Yoda is dying.”
Vader quirked his helmet at Rey.

“He’s getting old...he’s not moving around well, if what my General said about this time is right.” Rey grimaced. “He has been somewhat isolated for the last twenty years or so.”

“Yoda is nine hundred years old...of course he is dying.” Vader said to her callously.

Rey raised a brow at him. “You sure you’re alright? You’re usually less of an sleemo when you speak with me.” She crossed her arms across her chest and waited for him to reply.

Vader looked down at the floor. Embarrassment humming strongly from him.

Still Rey waited.

“I was kicked out of the meeting with Sidious,” Vader admitted quietly. “In front of every other commander, the Emperor informed me that I wasn’t needed even though he was the one to call me there.” A pause. “I don’t know any specifics of what is going on.” He was humiliated.

Rey swallowed, frowning. She didn’t know what to say. “That’s nothing to be embarrassed about.”

Vader shook his head. “I am no use to the Rebellion. I have no information. Nothing.”

“What makes you think we only want you for your information?” Rey asked him quietly, peering up at him as she took a step closer. “Can I tell you something that someone I respect greatly once told me?” At Vader’s nod she continued. “You are a person, your name is Anakin Skywalker.” She quirked her head at him. “We don’t view you as a weapon or as a source of information. You are a person first and foremost. You have to understand that.” She reached for his hands and gave them a squeeze. “Please.”

Vader gave her a slight nod of his helmet. “Okay.”

Rey smiled up at him. “Okay,” she returned just as quietly.
Vader disappeared in front of her. Their regular bond session coming to an abrupt end.

Rey sighed, looking down at her now empty hands. Hoping she got through to him. Hoping he understood what she was trying to say.

Rubbing the back of her neck, she put away her tools and hung a tarp over the speeder she had been working on earlier. Letting everyone know it wasn’t safe for use.

Rey quietly made her way out of the hangar, towards the sleeping quarters of the majority of the rebellion.

She needed to speak with Obi-Wan regardless of the time. Surely he would understand.

She came to a halt just outside his door and hesitated only for a moment. She knocked lightly. Waiting for him to let her inside.

She could hear shuffling on the other side of the door. Movement.

His door creaked open and a sleepy, disheveled looking Obi-Wan stared at Rey. He blinked a few times before opening his door further to let her in.

“Thank you,” Rey muttered as she stepped into his bedroom. Self-conscious.

Obi-Wan hummed in response before making his way over to a small table with a kettle and a pair of mugs. He reached into an old tin and dropped a tea bag in each of the mugs before making his way into the refresher to fill the kettle with water.

Rey stood in the middle of Obi-Wan’s bedroom, unsure. Uncertain about where she should sit. What she should do.

“I don’t have any chairs Rey, but you are more than welcome to take a seat on my bed.” The tap shut off and Obi-Wan came back into view. He gave Rey a tired smile as he set the kettle back down on the table and flicked a switch.
The two of them waited in silence for the water to begin to boil. Rey fidgeting with her wraps as she took a seat on the side of the Jedi Knight’s bed. She tugged at her arm wrappings, sighing.

She didn’t know where to begin. “I —”


Rey nodded, wrapping her arms around herself.

A minute or two of silence before the kettle started whistling softly. Obi-Wan got to work making the two of them a mug of tea. Humming quietly.

He handed a mug to Rey and sat down next to her on his bed.

Rey clutched the mug tightly, letting it warm her hands. She sighed. “I spoke with...Anakin.” Quiet. Barely above a whisper.

Obi-Wan took a sip of his tea. “And what did Anakin have to say?”

“He gave me advice on how to modify the airspeeders.” Rey took a sip of her tea. “A manual override in the cockpit that extends or pulls back the fins. Less compromise on the speeder.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly, grinning slightly as he took another sip. “I assume you’ll inform Jan later this morning.”

Rey nodded, hiding a yawn behind her hand. “I will. I couldn’t get to sleep, so I’ve just been tinkering in the hangar. Cleaning things up. Fiddling with the airspeeder assigned to me”

Obi-Wan hummed in understanding.

Silence for a few moments. Obi-Wan was letting Rey figure out what to say. Patient.
“Vader — no, Anakin — got kicked out of the emergency meeting that Palpatine called.” Quiet. “He called all the commanders there it sounded like, including Anakin, and then told him that he wasn’t needed. In front of everyone.” Rey swallowed. “He was embarrassed. Humiliated. Anakin said that he was of no use to us. To the Rebellion. That he wouldn’t be able to get information for us.”

“And what did you say to him?”

Rey sighed. “I reminded him that he was a person. That the Rebellion didn’t view him as a resource.” She shrugged. “We cut out right afterwards. I’m not sure he got the message. Not in the way I intended, at least.”

“I can speak with him,” Obi-Wan told her quietly. “We can figure out something. Go through his options once again.”

Rey gave him a slight nod of acknowledgement. She took another sip of her tea.

“Do you know why you’re not sleeping well?”

Rey hummed, shrugging. “I never sleep well. Not really. On Jakku I was always listening for someone trying to sneak in to hurt me. With the Resistance I was waiting to flee because of the First Order. And that’s not including the information overload I was getting from General Organa about everything.”

“And with Anakin?” Curiosity hummed from Obi-Wan.

Rey sighed. “I slept better around him. After the first week or so I felt safe. Protected.” She shrugged, took another sip of her tea. “The first week there I was a mess — I’m not going to lie.”

Obi-Wan hummed as he took a sip of his tea. “Sometimes Jedi and Padawans would make a point of meditating before bed — a way to relax before catching a few hours of sleep.” He shrugged, continuing, “we can experiment with that if you like. Luke prefers to do that.”

Rey nodded, it was strange to her, training with Luke. They both felt that way; it was abundantly
clear after she had burned him during their training duel. They had agreed to continue the...physical training together, but anything more than that felt wrong. Unnatural. Meditating together felt like an invasion of privacy.

“I’ll think about it,” she conceded. “I like morning meditation.”

Obi-Wan hummed in understanding. “Did you and Anakin speak about anything else?”

Rey narrowed her eyes, thinking. “Yoda.”

A sigh from Obi-Wan. “And?”

Rey shrugged. “He asked when we’d be going to visit Yoda. He holds a grudge. I called him out on his...rudeness.” She sipped her tea. “He wears his heart on his sleeve — that’s the correct saying, right?” She quirked her head to look at Obi-Wan sitting next to her. It was something she had picked up from a few other rebels over lunch one day.

Obi-Wan hummed. “Perhaps. You mean he is unable to hide his emotions.” At Rey’s nod he continued. “He’s always been like that. It affects him greatly — other people’s view of him.”

“So when Palpatine humiliated him in front of everyone, Anakin will take it personally.”

Obi-Wan confirmed her statement with a nod of his head. “I’ll need to speak with him. Write to him...make sure he doesn’t do anything too rash. Something he’ll regret later on.”

Rey gave the Jedi Knight a small grin. “You know him well. Thank you.”

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Rey stretched as she made her way on board of the modified transport vessel she and Obi-Wan had flown a few times together. Luke was saying his goodbyes to his sister, Han, and Chewbacca just outside. Obi-Wan was speaking with Bail and Breha Organa, and Ahsoka before he set foot on the vessel.
They were leaving for Dagobah. They were going to see Grand Master Yoda.

Rey was nervous. Nervous but excited. She wanted to learn — to understand her place in this time. Her place in everything. She wanted answers.

She took a seat in the cockpit on the jump seat. Luke could co-pilot with Obi-Wan. Shutting her eyes, Rey attempted to keep her emotions in check. Her nervousness. She didn’t want Anakin to worry any more than he already was.

She was thankful that Obi-Wan let him know of their travel plans.

Footsteps coming towards her. Rey blinked open her eyes and spotted Luke standing in the doorway with his go-bag hanging from his shoulder.

“You’re eager to leave,” he said to her in greeting.

Rey shrugged. “I’ve no one left to say goodbye to. I’ve no family here.” She sighed. “I said my goodbyes to Ahsoka and Leia earlier this morning. Han and Chewbacca last night. There isn’t anyone else I feel close enough with.”

Luke nodded at he dropped his bag on the floor and took a seat in the co-pilot chair. “Not Bail or Breha?”

Rey frowned, shaking her head. “No. I’m not close with them. I barely know them, they barely know me.” She didn’t understand what the issue was. Why Luke was making such a big deal about it.

Luke rubbed his face. “Obi-Wan let me say goodbye to my aunt and uncle before we left Tatooine — and we were in a rush. If you want to say goodbye to anyone, now is the time to do it.”

“I’ve said my goodbyes Luke,” Rey snapped. “All of them. It’s not like everyone here is going to wind up dead tomorrow morning. Stars! I don’t understand what else I can say!”
Luke sat silent on the co-pilot chair. Shocked expression on his face. “They’re dead?”

Rey frowned, trying to bring her annoyance back under control. “Who?” She was confused.

“Owen and Beru? My aunt and uncle.”

Rey was silent. She thought he knew that. Thought he understood what would happen when they refused to flee with he and Obi-Wan. What the hell had Obi-Wan told him? She gave him a curt nod. “A few hours after you fled on the Falcon. Owen made a grab for one of the stormtrooper’s weapons. Anakin couldn’t move quick enough to order them to stand down.”

Luke had a sick look on his face. His mouth opened and closed. Not a sound.

Footsteps made their way towards the two Padawan learners.

Obi-Wan poked his head into the cockpit before making his way in. Well-aware of the tension. Of the emotions humming strongly from both of his students.

“Let’s get out of here, shall we?” He carefully set his go-bag down on the floor and took the pilot seat. He began running through the pre-flight checks. Making sure everything was good to go.

Rey continued to watch Luke. Barely noticing the vessel lift off. Barely noticing as they jumped to hyperspace.


Luke glared at Rey. “Doesn’t give you an excuse to be cruel and cold.”

Rey was shocked. She didn’t realize she came across that way. Unattached. Uncaring. “I’m sorry. I apologize...truly I do. I’m used to keeping to myself. I’ve been hurt by people who were supposed to care.” She looked towards Obi-Wan who was watching them with extreme caution. “I didn’t realize that Luke didn’t know what happened to Owen and Beru when you two left Tatooine.”
Obi-Wan winced.

“Is that why you let me say goodbye to them?” Luke swung around in his seat to look at Obi-Wan. “Because you knew they be dead in the morning?” His hurt was humming strongly around the cockpit.

Obi-Wan nodded. “Yes.”

“Why didn’t you tell me that?” A plea. “I would’ve stayed. I could’ve found a place to hide.” Luke’s voice was quivering.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “That’s not true and you know it. If you stayed behind you would’ve been either killed by troopers or your father would’ve likely been forced to take you to the Emperor. He wouldn’t have had much of a choice. Not then.”

“My father,” Luke scoffed. He shook his head, laughing sadly. “My father the Sith.” He shook his head once more before standing up and grabbing his bag. “I’ll take first sleep shift. I’m sure you two need to talk. Get your stories straight.”

Rey sat in silence. Shocked. She had never seen this Luke like this before. This hurt. He reminded her of her Luke she had found on Ahch-To. Betrayed by the Jedi Order that he had clung onto for so long. Betrayed when it couldn’t help his nephew like it had helped him. The same act of fleeing. Of hiding.

“Oh.”

“Can you tell Luke we’re about to arrive?” Obi-Wan asked Rey quietly.

The pair of them had let Luke mourn his aunt and uncle in peace for a few hours before they forced him to speak with them and hear them out.

He was still hurt — very much so — but had allowed Obi-Wan and Rey to talk. Once they had all voiced their reasoning and concerns, Luke had returned to the sleeping quarters.

Rey sighed, nodding as she got up from the co-pilot seat and made her way towards Luke. Stopping at the doorway, she gave it a sharp knock, waiting for Luke to respond.

“What?” An annoyed voice called out from within the room.

Rey rolled her eyes as she attempted to wave open the doorway. Smirking when she succeeded in the first try. She crossed her arms across her chest, telling Luke nonverbally that she wasn’t going to take his shitty attitude. “We’re almost here. Obi-Wan wants you up front in the cockpit.”

A sigh. No movement.

“Now Luke!” Rey snapped at him. “Perhaps information was kept from you because of your immaturity. Hurry up!”

She twirled around without waiting for a reply — his attitude was getting to her. Obi-Wan as well.

They needed off of this ship. Sooner rather than later.

Rey plopped back down in the co-pilot seat and strapped in. Luke crashed here in her time, her past — he complained to Leia about it for years afterwards.

Kenobi was buckling his own harness when Luke made his way into the cockpit. “Strap in, Luke.” He called out to his Padawan without even looking at him. “You crashed into a swamp here in
Rey’s timeline. It could be a bit bumpy this go around.”

Luke did what he was told without comment.

The warning blared in the cockpit that they were about to exit hyperspace.

Rey tensed. Her hands tight on the console in front of her.

A jerk and a rattle as the vessel dropped roughly before their final destination.

Fog. All Rey could see was fog.

She began to open herself up in the Force. Trying to help Obi-Wan as he clutched at the controls. She could’ve sworn she heard him swear to himself ever so quietly.

“It’s really powerful here, the Force.” Rey shivered as she began to be bombarded with all that was living in the swampy, bog planet. She could sense a blurry point of brightness ahead of them. A living creature. Strong in the Force.

Yoda.

“Makes for the perfect hiding place,” Obi-Wan quipped as he pulled the modified transport vessel out of a dive. More rattling as Obi-Wan quickly slowed the vessel down. “Lower the landing gear please.”

Rey grabbed onto the lever and did as she was told. The hum of the gears dropping into the appropriate position. “Try not to land in a swamp, yeah? I don’t know how to swim.”


“We both don’t know how to swim,” Rey quipped. “You’d be an awful Master if we were forced to do so without any practice.”
Obi-Wan chuckled as he made a few more adjustments on the steering console. “Nothing like learning on the fly, in my opinion.”

Rey snickered as they finally broke through the fog.

Dense, gnarly-looking trees greeted them. Obi-Wan was carefully flying through a slight clearing. A makeshift, natural runway.

Obi-Wan sighed as he carefully brought the vessel to a stop, before a large swamp. He hummed amusedly, raising a brow at Rey.

It was likely the swamp that the Luke from her past crashed into. Rey grinned. No swamp swimming today. Obi-Wan was far more able with the Force than the Luke of Rey’s past.

Rey sighed as she felt a small being carefully and cautiously make their way towards the vessel. Yoda was checking out who was here. Or had recognized Obi-Wan’s Force signature and came to say hello.

Rey swung around in her seat to take a look at Luke.

His amazement was humming strongly. He was being bombarded with the Force present here.

“Alright?”

He gave Rey a shaky nod of his head as he unclipped his harness. “I apologize for earlier. To both of you.”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “I should’ve told you what happened. You’ve a right to be angry. Hurt.”

Luke grimaced. “I can be hurt and not be petty and rude. I apologize for that.”

Luke looked down at his hands in his lap. Sniffing. “They had every opportunity to leave with us. You practically begged Owen to run.” He shook his head. “His choice cost him his life and Aunt Beru’s.”

Rey watched as Obi-Wan nodded his agreement.

Silence for a few moments.

“Let’s go greet Yoda, shall we? He’ll be arriving outside our vessel shortly.” Obi-Wan stood up from his chair.

Rey and Luke following closely behind the Jedi Knight.

The trio made their way down the ramp together, stopping to wait as Obi-Wan closed it once again. They didn’t want any critters getting into their foodstuff. It needed to last them for some time. They didn’t want to overrun Yoda’s own food supply.

Rey turned around slowly, taking in everything around her. The trees were massive, the critters tiny. The air muggy. She could feel a dampness on her skin that she had never experienced before.

Dagobah was humid. Extremely humid. She needed to be careful to not become dehydrated because she forgot to drink water.

A tink of a cane making its way closer.

Rey turned in that direction. Spotting a small being with pointy years hobbling over towards them. Yoda.

“Kenobi, it is.” Grand Master Yoda said in greeting.
Obi-Wan gave Yoda a small bow of his head. “It’s been too long old friend.”

“It has.” Yoda quirked his head at the other two. He hobbled over closer to Luke. “Luke Skywalker, you are.”


Rey could’ve sworn she saw Yoda grin at Luke. It was difficult to tell.

Yoda narrowed his eyes at Rey. His frown evident as he came over towards her to investigate. “Unbelonging, you are.”

Rey’s mouth popped open in shock. *Right in one.*

“Rey here was the disturbance in the Force months ago,” Obi-Wan filled Master Yoda in. “She’s from the future.”

“From the future, she is?” Yoda sounded amazed. He looked between the group of Force sensitives. “Come to my place to eat, you must. Speak, we will. Waiting for a long time, I was.” He threw Obi-Wan a look before leading them along a narrow path.

Obi-Wan winced as he began to follow Yoda.

Rey had a difficult time holding back her snicker.

Luke was in shock. Uncertain. Hesitant.

Rey tucked her hand into the crook of his arm and tugged him along with her as she followed Obi-Wan. “Come Luke. I’m famished. Hopefully Yoda’s soup is tasty.”

“How’d you know it’s soup?” He questioned loudly.
Rey laughed. Yoda as well.

“From the future, she is.” Yoda reminded Luke. “Knows things, she does, like Yoda’s famous soup.”

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Rey hummed as she cleaned out her bowl. The soup, while strange smelling, was quite delicious in her opinion. Fresh, local plants made up most of the soup. Anything that was fresh was good enough for her. It was a far cry from her ration portions on Jakku.

“Like it, you did?” Yoda asked her from across the table. His smile was lighting up his face as he watched Rey finish up her meal.

Rey blushed as she swallowed the last of her dinner. “Very much, sir.” She set her bowl back down on the little table.

She, Obi-Wan, and Luke were all sitting on the floor of Yoda’s tiny home. Yoda, himself, was situated on top of a chair.

Yoda nodded enthusiastically to Rey. He smiled at Luke, who had also finished his soup. “Speak, we must. Learn, we will.”

Obi-Wan grimaced. “Rey’s changed some things already from her past. She was informed of only a few specific events from her General before leaving on an assignment.”

Yoda hummed. “Lost, we did?” His ears drooped.

Rey shook her head. “No...not exactly. We won — the Empire fell, but at a huge cost. Many people died. Too many.” She left out the part about the Imperial Navy fleeing to the Unknown Regions and rebuilding the Empire into the First Order. Yoda didn’t need to know about that. Not yet at least. “I — I actually have some questions for you, Master Yoda. My Master and I have some questions.”
Yoda’s ears twitched for a moment. “Not your Master, Obi-Wan is?”


Rey watched as Yoda’s ears drooped down low.

“Anakin Skywalker dead, he is.”

Rey shook her head. “No. That’s a lie and you know it.” An ear twitched ever so slightly. “He chose the dark side, yes. Became Darth Vader. But Anakin Skywalker is very much alive.” Silence. Yoda was upset. “Anakin came back to the light to save Luke in my timeline. He came back to the light to protect him from Palpatine. His love — his attachment to his son allowed him to do that. Luke’s unconditional love for his father allowed Anakin to return to the light side. It allowed him to defeat Palpatine.”

“It allowed him to bring balance to the Force,” Obi-Wan added in quietly. “But it cost him his life in return.”

“What?” Luke was shocked.

“Palpatine likes to use Force lightning to teach his apprentices a lesson, Luke.” Rey sighed. “He was holding back in his teachings apparently. Anakin was hit with full powered Force lightning. It shorted out his life support system. He was unable to survive it. But, he was able to kill the Emperor.”


Yoda hummed. Rey focused on the Grand Master of the Jedi Order sitting in front of her.

“Darkness, you have. Taught you hate, he has.”
Rey rolled her eyes. “He said you’d say that. Warned me to not take it seriously. But...I’m desperate for some answers. We both are. We don’t know who else to ask.”

Yoda frowned at Rey, his eyes narrowed in distrust. He looked over towards Kenobi.

“Just listen to her, please. Anakin has paired up with the Rebellion recently. He helped free slaves from Cymoon-1. Helped Luke succeed in destroying the first Death Star. He protected Leia from being captured and tortured.” Obi-Wan paused briefly. “Both he and Rey tried to prevent Alderaan from being destroyed by the Death Star. He found plans for the second one. Gave them to the Rebellion.” He sighed. “He told Rey where Ahsoka was — Malachor. In the Sith temple. An assignment that she was given by you, apparently. I would’ve liked to have known about it. I was unaware she was even alive, until Rey showed up at the Rebel Base.”

Yoda’s ears twitched. “An important mission, it was. Could not have outsiders find out. Secret, it was.”

Obi-Wan scoffed. Rey could feel his hurt wafting strongly against both her and Luke.

“You gave her, and her crew, a mission to find a Sith holocron in the hopes that it would provide answers on how to kill Darth Vader.” Obi-Wan’s voice shook slightly. “You didn’t tell me because you believed I would try to help Anakin. Because I was his Master. Because he was my Padawan. Because I blamed myself for his...choosing the dark side.”

“A Sith he is. Enemy of the Jedi he has chosen to be.”

“What Jedi?” Obi-Wan shook his head at Yoda. “They were killed, remember?”

“By Darth Vader!” Yoda whacked his cane on the table.

Rey jumped slightly, as did Luke. Obi-Wan didn’t even flinch.

“Because you wouldn’t help him when he came to you with visions of his pregnant wife dying,” Obi-Wan responded quietly. His voice strong. “So he went to the one last person he trusted — Sheev Palpatine. And that action cost him, and everyone else, everything. It led to the destruction of the Jedi Order because you refused to help someone in need. In desperate need.”
Silence. The sounds of critters scurrying outside. The crackle of flames in the fireplace on the far side of Yoda’s home.

Rey watched Yoda with wide eyes, waiting for him to respond.

“Not his wife his vision was of,” Yoda said quietly. “Vision of you dying.” He gestured to Obi-Wan.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “Is that what he told you, or is that what you assumed? Because I didn’t even know that he and Padmé were married. I only knew that he had feelings for her. And she for him. I only realized she was pregnant after the Temple was...destroyed.”

Quiet.

“Assumed, I did,” Yoda admitted quietly. “Against the ways of the Jedi, marriage is.”

Rey nodded. “That was one of the reasons why Anakin and Padmé kept it a secret. They were married shortly after he lost his right arm on...Geonosis, I think it was called.”

“How old were they when they got married?” Luke asked Rey. He looked to Obi-Wan. “I’ve forgotten what you told me and Leia.”

Rey turned to look at Luke. “Your father was nineteen — the same age as you are now. He was still Obi-Wan’s Padawan at the time. Padmé was...twenty-four, I think.”

Luke nodded slightly. “How did he lose his arm?”


“How did he replace Dooku?”
Rey winced. “Anakin said that Palpatine ordered him to kill Dooku. Before he realized that Palpatine was the Sith Lord the Jedi were looking for.” She frowned. “He was being tested to see what he would do. Palpatine was checking what Anakin would do. He wanted to see how close he was to falling to the dark side.”

“The war was blurring right and wrong. Good and bad. Light and dark,” Obi-Wan added quietly. “It wouldn’t have been a leap. For any of us. Myself included.”


Obi-Wan shook his head. “I was knocked unconscious, Luke. I’m not sure.”

Rey exhaled slowly. “He decapitated Dooku as he knelt before him. Anakin had won the lightsaber duel. He used both his own lightsaber and Dooku’s Sith lightsaber and decapitated him.” Rey sniffed. “Palpatine ordered him to leave Obi-Wan behind. Anakin told him off and carried Obi-Wan on his shoulders.”


Rey turned to look at Yoda, who was silent through all of Luke’s questioning. “There is still light in him. In Anakin. There is still love. He came back to the light side in my past — he will do it again. And I will do anything and everything I can to make sure he doesn’t die because of it.” She crossed her arms across her chest. “Whether you want to help or not. That is why I am here.”

Yoda nodded slowly. He was watching Rey closely. “What is your question? Yours and your Master’s?”

Rey frowned. “We’ve bonded strangely. More than a Master-Padawan bond, Anakin said.” She looked to Obi-Wan to confirm. He nodded. “Occasionally we can see each other. Speak with each other as if we were in the same room. Teleportation. It happened the first time when Anakin was having a breakdown on his Destroyer. He thought I followed him. I thought he had entered my bedroom that he had set aside for me.” Rey hummed. “It happens regularly now. We talk to each other all the time.”

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “Only Rey can see him. I couldn’t on our trip to Crait.”
“Thank the Force for small miracles. Mothma wouldn’t have been happy.” Rey sighed in relief.

Yoda quirked his head at Rey. “Feel his emotions, you did?”

Rey nodded. “The first time it happened I felt tears running down my cheeks. I thought they were my own. But they were Anakin’s tears. I felt his emotions. His hurt. His anger at himself. His hate for Palpatine. His...grief. On the way to Crait I was picking up on his anxiety.”

Yoda rubbed his chin. “Jedi holocron, I need.”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “Anakin can’t get access to them; he doesn’t even know if they’ve been destroyed or not. Palpatine knows of Rey. He’s leaving Anakin in the dark about the Empire’s future actions. He’s been kicked out of meetings. He is being set up for failure.”

“In danger, he is.” Yoda pushed his empty soup bowl away from himself. “In his mind, you have been?” He poked Rey with his cane as he got up from the table to carry the dishes to the sink nearby.

Rey watched her bowl float to the sink along with all the others. “Yes. A day after I arrived in this time. He poked around in my mind...I got upset and pushed him out and ended up in his. I saw the memory of Padmé telling him she was pregnant.” Rey frowned. “Freaked him out. I thought he was going to kill me. But he realized he had damaged my shields I had built the day before, he helped me rebuild them instead. Kept me hidden from Palpatine.”

Yoda hummed as Obi-Wan helped him do the dishes. “Only him, this has happened with?”

Rey felt her stomach clench. Luke didn’t know this part. She looked at him for a second or two before focusing on Yoda, who was now focused entirely on her. “No. I did it just before I arrived here in this time. Against another Force user. I didn’t realize I was Force sensitive until then.”

Yoda hummed once again. “Strange, you are.” He gave Rey a grin before he got to work on the dishes.

Rey sighed, sharing a look with Luke. He was fighting a grin.
“He cares about you,” he said to Rey quietly. “My...father.” He frowned at the word. Unused to it.

He was still trying to get comfortable with the idea of Anakin Skywalker as his father — the fallen Jedi. The Sith.


Obi-Wan cleared his throat as he took a seat back down on the floor. Yoda made his way back to his chair.

“Connected, you have become. Allowed that to happen, your bond did.” Yoda winked at Rey. “Light and dark — balance it is.”

Rey frowned. “Everyone has light and dark inside them. It’s our actions that determine whether we are lightsiders or darksiders.”


Rey frowned. She didn’t think it was that simple. “But...why though? Why have we connected the way we have?”

Yoda chuckled and tapped his cane on the table a few times. “Mysterious the Force is. Has its reasons, it does.” He shook his head at Rey. “Trust it you must, the will of the Force. Only a youngling I am, compared to the Force. Know everything, I do not.”

Rey nodded in acceptance. She’d let Anakin know, the next chance she got.

“What has happened differently than before?” Yoda smiled at Rey. “Curious about the changes, I am.”

Rey frowned. “Quite a bit actually. I’m not sure where to start.”
“Tell him about your arriving here in this time — what happened. We can start from there.” Obi-Wan suggested to Rey.

Rey sighed, nodding.

She cleared her throat. “I went to bed in a hut at the first Jedi Temple, it was thundering and lightning. Raining heavily. I was afraid — I grew up on Jakku, I had never experienced that before.” Rey paused, thinking about that time months ago. “I grabbed my lightsaber — couldn’t get to sleep without it. Fell asleep shortly afterwards.” She nodded to herself. “Woke up in a storage closet on the Devastator. Figured out pretty quickly that something was wrong. The Force was screaming at me that something was...wrong, I think. Dangerous. Met Anakin — no, Vader — coming out of the lift. He noticed my lightsaber,” Rey placed hers on the table in front of Yoda for him to see, “recognized it for obvious reasons. Considering it used to be his.”

Yoda hummed. “Curious, he was.”

Rey nodded. “He felt the disturbance in the Force. Went to investigate. Figured out quite quickly that I was from the future. I said some things...that he was supposed to be dead, that the Empire had fallen.” Rey sniffed. “He told me I needed shields. That Palpatine would find me and turn me to the dark side. He helped me build my shields. He protected me from Palpatine. He is still protecting me from Palpatine.”

“How did you feel when you woke up in the storage closet?” Obi-Wan asked Rey quietly.

Rey blew out a long breath. “Pounding headache and a racing heart. Like I had run for my life.”

Yoda hummed in interest. “Mysterious the Force is.”


Rey scrunched her face up. “I told Anakin where you and Obi-Wan were. Palpatine had also noticed the disturbance in the Force. He assumed it was you awakening. He must’ve had someone watching you. A contact on Tatooine somewhere. Anakin didn’t want Palpatine to find you, but it was what he was assigned.”
“He needed to do something to get us to move,” Obi-Wan murmured. He frowned to himself, lost in thought. “I wonder if Palpatine had heard about Luke from one of the many Imperial forces and bounty hunters I’ve had the pleasure to meet.”

“When was this?” Luke’s confusion hummed strongly around the little home.

Obi-Wan smirked at Luke. “Since you were a boy. Off and on. Stormtroopers doing a search for random things. Random people. Me, most of the time. Bounty hunters looking to make a lot of credit.” He cleared his throat. “I killed Maul a couple of years ago. Two, I think.”

“Still alive, he was?” Surprise hummed strongly from Yoda.

Obi-Wan nodded, he turned slightly to look at Luke and Rey. “I sliced off his lower half when I was still a Padawan. Thought I had killed him.” He grimaced. “He got...new legs. Had a grudge against me. Made sure I killed him this time.” He looked to Yoda. “He arrived on Malachor when Ahsoka and her crew were there. Three years ago. Ahsoka said he wasn’t a Sith any longer according to him. Just dark. He wanted to end the universe. Take everything down with him.”

Rey cleared her throat. “Sounds like a nice bloke.”

“Troubled he was,” Yoda agreed emphatically.

Rey frowned to herself. Thinking about the things she had changed. “Anakin coming to Tatooine to warn Obi-Wan, kind of changed how Luke and Obi-Wan got off Tatooine. When they did.”

Yoda nodded slowly. “How?”

Rey winced. “In my timeline, Leia was captured just after Scarif. The Devastator tracked her ship to Tatooine. She was trying to flee Vader. The Tantive IV was leaking, leaving a trail. Bail told her that if she was ever hunted by Vader to ask Obi-Wan on Tatooine for help.” She looked down at the table. “Owen Lars bought the two droids she had sent down to the surface with a message for Kenobi. Artoo and Threepio. She had also given Artoo the plans for the Death Star. Luke went to Obi-Wan’s hut to give him the message. Her plea for help.”

Rey rubbed her face. “Stormtroopers were close behind. Vader ordered them to carry out a search. They tracked down Owen…”
She looked at Luke with sad eyes. “Your aunt and uncle’s deaths were what convinced you to leave Tatooine. With Obi-Wan, Han Solo, and Chewbacca on board the Millennium Falcon.”

“Their deaths were fixed points Luke,” Obi-Wan said sadly to his charge. “I’m sorry. I really, truly am sorry.”


“Leia was captured and taken aboard the Death Star. She was...interrogated by Vader. Tortured. He was searching for the location of the Rebel Base. Of Yavin. He couldn’t get through her shields, my Leia said. But he tried...for hours and hours.” Rey cleared her throat. “Tarkin was angry that Vader couldn’t do his job. He forced my Leia to watch as he fired on Alderaan. Still she wouldn’t talk. She gave them an old base. She was awaiting her execution when Luke, Obi-Wan, Han, and Chewbacca arrived to rescue her.”

She turned to look at Luke. “Apparently you are too short to be a stormtrooper. She made fun of you.”

Luke gave a shaky laugh. His eyes were watery. He gave Rey a curt nod of his head. “Sounds like Leia.”

Rey hummed in agreement. A slight grin on her face. She sobered up as she continued to describe the changes. “Obi-Wan sacrificed himself to allow them to leave the Death Star. He knew that Vader wouldn’t pass up the chance to fight him once again. He was a distraction so Vader wouldn’t recognize his children. Their Force signatures.” Rey shook her head. “I don’t know if Vader knew who Leia was when he was interrogating her. My Leia said he had no idea of her until later. Anakin thinks he didn’t care...that he was likely too far gone. I think he was just focused on his task, going through the motions. He believed himself to be alone. He thought his child had died with Padmé. He wasn’t looking for a relation. A child.”

Yoda cleared his throat. “Changed much you have.” He gave Rey a small smile. “Early you arrived.”

Rey nodded. “Yeah...a few months before the Death Star happened.”

“You arriving early changed Anakin.” Obi-Wan said quietly. “Reminded him he was human. That
he was a person. That resulted in things happening differently. Leia wasn’t captured, she was aided by him. Luke was helped above the Death Star, instead of hunted by Vader.”

“Cymoon-I as well,” Rey informed the room quietly. “In my past Han, Luke, and Leia went into the factory. Luke found the slaves there. Vader arrived as they were trying to flee, I think. Most of them died in the explosion or were killed in Luke and Vader’s lightsaber fight.” Rey closed her eyes, trying to remember what her General had told her. “Luke told my General that Vader was questioning why he had that particular lightsaber. He kept asking for his name...his identity. Luke got away...Vader was left behind — I don’t know exactly what happened. There were explosions...the factory was destroyed.”

“Knows of his children he does?” Yoda asked the room quietly.

Rey nodded. “I told him of them the day I arrived here in this time. The Force insisted that I tell him about his family.”

Yoda hummed. “Attached he is.”


“It’s a cultural thing, I believe,” Obi-Wan told Yoda. “Family is exceptionally important in Tatooine culture. It is something that we didn’t take into consideration when Qui-Gon and I took Anakin from Tatooine. We left his mother behind.”


Obi-Wan nodded. “We left her a slave.”

“Jedi Order not Anakin’s family?” Yoda pondered aloud.

Rey shook her head. “Not when the council of the Order didn’t want him there and routinely made sure he was made aware of that fact — including you, Grand Master Yoda.”
Yoda quirked his head at Rey. “Much anger you have. Full of hate you are.”

Rey snorted. “Not hate, no. Frustration perhaps.”

Yoda hummed. Frowning as he got up from his seat. “Much to talk about we have, Master Kenobi and I. Rest, younglings should have. Tomorrow, a new day it is.”

Rey raised a brow at Yoda. He was shooing her and Luke away. Like a pest. She snorted as she snatched up her lightsaber from atop the table. “C’mon Luke...we’re not wanted here.”

Rey made her way out of the little home after she said her goodnight to Obi-Wan. Luke following closely behind her as they trekked back towards the vessel they arrived in.

Rey was fuming. Annoyed at Yoda. At his blatant disregard for her assessment of Anakin. He wouldn’t listen to her. Wasn’t hearing what she was trying to tell him. He always went back to her darkness. Her anger. He was trying to tell her she was unreliable. Trying to tell Kenobi and Luke that she was too angry to be taken seriously. Unless she could be used for the Rebellion’s benefit.

*Like a weapon.*

Rey sniffed as she lowered the ramp of the vessel. Glaring as it hit the ground, allowing she and Luke to climb up into their home for the next few months.

She was a person, not a weapon. No matter what her midichlorian counts were.

Rey came to an abrupt halt as she spotted Anakin standing in the seating area of the vessel. He was looking around, trying to see Rey.

“I apologize for my anger,” Rey said in greeting.

Anakin spun around to look at Rey. “My ears were muffled, but I couldn’t see you.”

“Yoda was making me angry too, Rey. You’ve no reason to apologize.” Muted. Luke was standing
next to her.

Rey’s eyes grew. She looked between the two Skywalkers.

“Who is with you?” Anakin. His curiosity humming strongly.


Luke’s surprise was wafting hard against Rey. Rey turned to look at Anakin. His helmet quirked slightly as he was watching the spot next to Rey. The spot where Luke was standing. “Can you see him?”

Anakin shook his head. “No. Just you standing in my quarters.”

“Where is he?” Muffled.

Rey sighed. She pointed at Anakin in front of her, he was slowly stepping closer. “Just there, Luke.”

Rey waited as Luke looked closer at the spot she indicated. “I see...a distortion...it’s...wavy.”

“A distortion?” Rey asked excitedly.

Luke nodded. “I have to really focus. I’m opening myself up a bit in the Force...but yeah. I see a wavy distortion.”

“What can he see?” Anakin brought Rey’s attention back to him.

Rey turned to look at her Master. “He says he can sort of see a distortion if he opens himself up a bit and focuses. It’s wavy, he said.”
Anakin came even closer. His curiosity was wafting hard against Rey’s shields. He shook his head. “I can’t — I can’t see him. I can’t see the waves.” His shame was now beginning to leak through his shields.

Rey held up a hand. “It’s alright, Anakin. We will figure it out. Figure something out.”

“It’s my stupid helmet...I can’t take it off to see him.”

Rey placed a hand on his shoulder, trying to give him some comfort.

“Oh! Hi!” Luke called out in surprise.

Anakin turned to look at Luke. He had heard him speak.

“Luke?” Wonder. Amazement. Anakin was inspecting his son, taking in every detail he could see. Love hummed strongly from the Sith Lord.


Rey clutched onto Anakin’s shoulder. Amazed at what was happening. Afraid to move. Afraid to speak. She didn’t want to break the spell between father and son.

“My son.” Rey could hear the wonder in Anakin’s voice even with the vocoder distorting it.


“You got your mother’s height.”

Luke snorted loudly. Wiping a stray tear. “So I’ve been told. Taller than Leia though.”
“Yes...most humans are.”

Rey snickered quietly. “She’d shoot you with a blaster if she heard you making fun of her height. Han already learned that the hard way.”

Pride hummed strongly around the room. “Good.”

Luke’s tears were flowing freely now. As were Anakin’s behind his mask. Rey could feel them running down her cheeks.

She exhaled slowly. Making sure her shields were strong. Her focus. She didn’t want to lose them now.

“I’m proud of you Luke,” Anakin said reverently, well-aware that this opportunity was temporary. “So proud. You’re strong.” He tapped his chest. “In here.” He moved to his head. “And here.”

“Father...please, please come back to the light,” Luke begged. “There is good in you...I know it. I’ve heard all about it.”

Anakin shook his head. “It isn’t the right time...I don’t belong. I don’t fit. I have to stop Palpatine.”

“I can help you,” Luke pleaded. “Me and Rey...and Leia. We can help you.”


Luke shook his head, wiping his cheeks. “Yoda doesn’t trust Rey. Kept saying that she was dark. That she had too much anger and hate in her.” He sniffed. “He’s full of banthashit. He’s afraid of her.”

“He will teach you...Yoda is wise,” Anakin insisted. “He is stubborn. But so is Obi-Wan. Yoda will help teach you the ways of the Force.”
Rey cleared her throat. “He said our bond was the way of the Force...that it is allowing us to connect. It’s bringing balance.” She shrugged. “He said a lot, but I think that was the gist of it.”

“He’s likely keeping something to himself...it’s no matter. It is what it is.” Anakin said quietly, looking for a moment at Rey. His hand still holding the side of Luke’s face. His thumb rubbing his cheek gently. Wiping his tears.

Slowly the bond began to fade. Anakin was trying to hold on. Memorizing Luke.

Rey sobbed when it closed entirely. Her hand dropping from where Anakin’s shoulder was only a moment ago.

Hi!

I just wanted to give everyone the heads up for possible spoilers for TROS...well...something from a certain trailer.

Think red and angry looking. Unstable even.

(Do I have to even warn readers for that?? I have no idea.)

Better safe than sorry I suppose.

Cheers!

One Week.

One week of watching with Luke on the sidelines while Obi-Wan and Yoda bickered all day long.

Yoda was refusing to teach both Rey and Luke; instead, he was insisting for Obi-Wan to leave and bring him Leia. “More rounded she is,” was his reasoning.

This was met with Obi-Wan, Luke, and Rey laughing at Yoda. Obi-Wan informing the Grand Master that Leia stubbornly refused to be taught the ways of the Force. That she was alarmingly like her father. Her biological father, he said. Not Bail.

That shut Yoda up for the rest of the day. Instead, he hobbled about, occasionally stopping in front of Rey or Luke as they prepared for lightsaber training, narrowing his eyes and muttering under his breath before he continued on.

Currently, they were all situated around Yoda’s dinner table, finishing up their meal when Yoda broke the silence.

“Too old they are!”
Obi-Wan rolled his eyes. “Leia is the same age as Luke, and you were wanting to train her. Find something else.” He took a sip of his tea.

Yoda narrowed his eyes at Rey.

She sighed. “I’m only a year older than either of them. Barely worth mentioning.”

Luke snickered from his spot next to Rey.

“In your time, I trained?” Yoda asked Rey quietly.

Rey nodded. “Luke desperately needed a teacher. You wanted to teach Leia then too.”


Rey hummed in agreement.

Yoda’s ears drooped. “Mistakes I will make.”

Rey frowned, he had a point.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “If you stay stuck in the old ways, then yes you will make mistakes. You need to be open to doing things a bit differently. There is not one way to teach, or see, the ways of the Force.”

Silence for a few moments.

Yoda sighed. He had made his decision. “Master Kenobi trains you tomorrow, watch I will.” He frowned. “See where you are, I must. Help with training, I will.”

Rey nodded her agreement, but remained silent.

Obi-Wan took another sip of his tea. A slight grin on his face — he had won the battle. He turned to look at Rey. “Have you spoken with Anakin at all since we arrived here?”


Obi-Wan set his mug down roughly. “I’m sorry, what?”

Yoda leaned forward in his chair. “Explain you must.”


“It was just wavy distortion before Rey touched him,” Luke added quietly.

“Speak you did.” Yoda was prodding. He wanted to know what father and son discussed.

Luke nodded, but remained silent.

Yoda hummed, narrowing his eyes. “Secret it was.”

“Private,” Rey corrected, rolling her eyes at Yoda. “Not secret.”

Silence in response. Obi-Wan’s wonder humming strongly around the little home. Rey could feel the mind of Yoda whirring. Thinking hard about she and her Master.

“I told him what you said about our strange bond.” She needed to give him something.
Yoda grinned. “Comment he did?”

Rey snorted. “Yeah...he said that you were probably keeping something to yourself. That you knew more than you were letting on.”

Obi-Wan’s tea went down the wrong hole. Coughing, he hid his grin from Yoda with a strategically placed hand.

Yoda’s ears twitched, but he didn’t confirm or deny Anakin’s accusations.

Rey raised an eyebrow — Anakin was right. She mentally patted herself on the back — Yoda was one to watch closely. She wasn’t sure she trusted him. Couldn’t get a clear read on him. *At all.* He wasn’t bad per se, just someone who liked to manipulate events to his liking. Anakin had warned her of this earlier, when she was still hidden on his ship. At Rey’s scoff of disbelief and reminder that he was a Jedi *not* a Sith, he merely shrugged his shoulders and told her she’d know what he meant when she spent some time with the Grand Master.

She saw it in play now. The ancient, wise Master used to no one questioning his bogus explanation for something.

Rey took a sip of her tea and smirked at Yoda.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “How was he?” Quiet.

Rey looked at the Jedi Knight. His unspoken question hanging over them. He wanted to know how Anakin reacted to Luke. She gave him a small smile. “Good,” she responded equally as quietly. “Curious, but really good overall.”

Out of the corner of her eye she could see Luke give a shaky nod of his head in agreement.

“I felt his...love,” he told the room. “It was...overwhelming. But true. It felt right.”

Yoda shook his head. “Love, Sith do not have. Mistake you have made. Confused you are.” He glared at Rey for giving Luke the opportunity to speak with his father.
“Stars you are so full of yourself!” Rey pounded her fist on the table. The mugs shaking threateningly. “Of course he feels love! It’s what got him in the mess he’s in now. That doesn’t just disappear!” She returned Yoda’s glare with one of her own. “You don’t understand Anakin at all! He’s a complete mystery to you even after all this time.” She shook her head in disbelief. “What the hell have you been doing here if not trying to understand what went wrong?”

“Rey...you need to calm down, please,” Obi-Wan said from behind her. A hand placed gently on her shoulder. “Anakin is a parent who loves his children very much...you are right. Yoda doesn’t understand — hasn’t seen Anakin in years. The last time he saw him, he wasn’t in a good place. None of us were.”

Rey sat, fuming. She could feel her heart racing. Her annoyance at the Grand Master sitting in front of her was pulsing strongly through to her bones.

“Calm down…please.”

She took a breath. Then another.

Yoda was watching Rey closely. His head quirked slightly as if seeing something he had never seen before. Curious. Slightly cautious.

“A parent wouldn’t just...use their child. Pretend to love them in order to use them.” Rey shook her head, trying to explain. She needed to explain. “A parent truly loves their child. They’d do anything for them. Anything. That’s what parents do.” Her voice broke off into a whisper.

Rey took another breath. Her throat was tight. Her emotions strong.

Yoda nodded. “Misunderstand, I do.”

Rey swallowed. Her hands shaking.

Obi-Wan’s hand squeezed her shoulder gently. Calmness was emitting from him. Comfort.
Rey hid her face behind her hands. Overwhelmed and embarrassed. She choked back a sob. Refusing to cry.

“Emotions you have,” Yoda said quietly to Rey. “Let go you must. Overwhelming they are.”

“It doesn’t work like that,” Rey’s voice cracked. “Emotions don’t just disappear. They don’t just *poof* away.”

Obi-Wan hummed as he traded spots with Luke. Now sitting beside Rey, he wrapped an arm around her shoulders. “True...but we talked about what was meant by ‘letting go’, remember?”

Rey sniffed. Nodding. “Not letting our anger control us. Instead, it’s us controlling our anger, our emotions.”

Obi-Wan hummed once again. “And how do we control our emotions?”

Rey closed her eyes. “By figuring out why we feel the way we do. Analyzing our emotions. Explaining.”

Pride hummed around Rey. “That’s right. So...can you walk us through why you became so angry at what Yoda said?”

Rey’s lip wobbled. “Because my parents abandoned me. Sold me off for drinking money. Anakin isn’t like that. He’s good. He cares. He doesn’t toss people away like garbage. He doesn’t use them.” She took another breath. “He’s not like that,” she repeated quietly.

Silence for a few moments as Rey tried to calm herself down. She was far too emotional. Overwhelmed from the Force nexus on the swampy world. It was making her anger flare up over the smallest of things.

She sniffed, wiping her cheeks as Obi-Wan continued to wrap her in comfort. “I can’t handle the darkness here...it’s too much.” Quiet. Ashamed at her failure.

“Well...how about we work on your shields?” Obi-Wan suggested quietly. “Perhaps there is a
crack in there somewhere...a flaw.”

Rey knew her shields were strong. Practically impenetrable. The same thing happened on Mustafar. Her shields held firm as she became more and more furious with the hand she was dealt. She nodded her consent anyway.

She didn’t know what else to do. Didn’t understand why she was so susceptible to the dark.

Her Master’s words were running through her head. His suggestion that she was the daughter of Imperial scientists. She mentally shook her head at her wayward thoughts.

He was wrong. He had to be. But his words refused to leave her no matter how wrong she was certain he was.

She was just Rey. Just Rey of Jakku. She was a nobody like her mother and father. A junk trader. A scavenger who happened to have the Force running through her veins. Her ticket off of the dust bowl she called home.


She pulled away from Obi-Wan. Nodding as she did. Self-conscious and uncertain. “My walls are strong. I know they are.”

Obi-Wan nodded in agreement. “Can we try anyway, you and I?”

Rey hesitated only for a moment before giving him another nod of her head.

Hands gently cupped her head. Obi-Wan was watching her closely, silently giving her yet another opportunity to balk.

A curt nod. “Let’s get this done.” She shut her eyes the same time as Obi-Wan.

Gentle prodding as he slid into the surface of her mind.
Is this what happened on Mustafar? He asked her nonverbally.

Yes, Rey responded in kind. My shields were strong, but the Sith Temple still affected me. It still brought out my anger. It made me emotional. Overwhelmed.

How sure are you that your shields were strong?

Rey hummed. Swallowing before she thought of her answer for Obi-Wan. Anakin said that I was able to hide my Force sensitivity from Snoke. That he could barely sense me himself.

Obi-Wan began testing her walls, not unkindly. Double checking. Making sure nothing was missed.

Rey could feel his thoughts whirring. He was trying to buy time as he thought hard about what she had said.

Am I just more susceptible to the dark? Rey couldn’t prevent her fear from leaking through her shields.

Or...you are just more susceptible to emotion. I know there has been...a lot of emotions here over the last week or so. You could be picking up on myself and Yoda’s annoyance with each other. I apologize for that, if that is the case. He hummed to himself as he continued to check her shields for any sort of breech. It’s true that the dark is also rife with emotion. That’s what drives it. Perhaps you are picking up on the residual emotion here from the distant past, Obi-Wan suggested. How did Anakin help you?

Rey thought for a moment, trying to figure out how to explain what he did. She sighed. He came back for me. Saved me. I could feel him wrap a sort of blanket of comfort and protection around me as he and the troopers came to his fortress to search for a possible second intruder. She sniffed. He allowed me to vent. Vocalize my anger at him. Blow off steam. He said he wouldn’t judge and told me to speak about what was on my mind.

Understanding hummed strongly from Obi-Wan. Alright. Perhaps you and I could figure out something like that here. Away from everyone else.
More tapping and prodding from the Jedi Knight against her shields. Amusement pulsated strongly against Rey’s walls.

*These are ridiculously strong. Anakin has taught you well.* He was proud.

Rey grinned as Obi-Wan carefully and gently pulled out of her head. She blinked a few times as she took in her surroundings.

Yoda was watching the two closely. A frown on his face.


Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “Shields are good,” he told the Grand Master.

Rey clutched her mug once again, taking a sip of her spicy tea. A favourite of Yoda’s apparently. She hummed in contentment. It was a favourite of hers as well.

“I like your tea.” Rey threw Yoda an olive branch.

Yoda’s mouth popped open in surprise. He chuckled, understanding exactly what she was trying to accomplish. “Homemade it is. Spent years adjusting recipe, I did.”

“Does it get cold here ever?” Luke was curious. Eager to move the conversation along to something other than his father.

Yoda shook his head. “Coldest is now. Rainy season it is. Foggy.” A pause. “Temperate it is.”

Rey nodded, taking another sip of her tea.

Hesitation hummed from Yoda. “Apologize I do. Understand Anakin Skywalker I do not.” His ears drooped down low. “Seen as pathway to the dark side, attachment was. Blinded by tradition I am.”
Silence for a few moments as both she and Luke digested his apology.

“Perhaps some attachment is important. Necessary,” Obi-Wan suggested quietly. “Perhaps if it is healthy attachment, it is good. It can be an anchor preventing one from falling to the dark side.”

Rey closed her eyes in relief. Obi-Wan understood. She hummed in contentment as she took another sip of her tea. “Perhaps,” she agreed.

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“Review this will likely be,” Yoda began quietly as he handed out old datapads to both Luke and Rey.

Obi-Wan had taken them from D’Qar upon realizing that their age made them useless to the Rebellion. They no longer had access to the HoloNet — a software upgrade was needed that neither of the datapads had the room for. They were obsolete for research, but were still able to function as a notebook.

Rey flicked hers on, marvelling at the old technology. It was much older than anything she could find in the many crashed Star Destroyers on Jakku. Decades older.

“How old are these?” Luke frowned at the datapad in his hand. He too was curious about their age.

Yoda hummed for a moment. Chuckling as he rubbed his chin in thought. “Older I am. Although close it is.”

Rey snickered.

“Teach you theory of the Force, I will.” Yoda gestured to the pair of students. “Practical lessons Master Kenobi will teach.”

Rey nodded in understanding. She opened up the note taking program on her datapad and waited for the lecture to begin.
She could barely sit still, her excitement was humming strong underneath her shields. She was going to school — something she had never considered to be possible for someone like her.

Yoda cleared his throat. “The Force, explain it you will.” He grinned at Rey, waiting for her response.

“The Force is an entity which gives the Force sensitive individual their power.” Rey thought for a moment, trying to remember what her Master had told her. “It’s created by everything that is living, and it surrounds and penetrates us. The Force is the thing that binds the galaxy together.”


Luke nodded. “Yes. That’s basically what Obi-Wan said to me.”

Yoda hummed, a grin on his face as he focused once more on Rey. “Agree as well, I do.” He rubbed his chin. “See Force as a being, you do.” A statement, not a question.

Rey answered anyway. “Yes.”

“Conversations you have?”

Rey smiled slightly. “Occasionally. The Force likes to give me advice sometimes. Suggestions. Sometimes really broad or really specific — it depends on the situation, I think.”

Yoda’s curiosity was humming strongly around the room. “Rare, conversations are. Unheard of, they are not.” A pause. “About your Master, they are?”

Rey hesitated for a moment before confirming his suspicions with a nod of her head. “Sometimes. The Force told me to tell him about his family when I first arrived here in this time.”

Yoda nodded slowly. His understanding humming strongly.
“Anakin said that the Force was telling him not to kill me. Screaming at him not to kill me.” Rey rubbed her arms self-consciously. “When I first arrived, I mean.”


Luke rubbed his face with his hand, nodding. “On Tatooine. When Obi-Wan arrived at the farm insisting that I needed to leave with him. I didn’t really understand what it was at the time. But, I remember a voice in my head screaming at me to flee with Obi-Wan. No matter what.”

Yoda hummed. “Speak to some, the Force does. Important to listen, it is.” A pause. “Explain the Force, I will try. Help you understand, I hope it does.”

He cleared his throat, looking between Rey and Luke. “Organized into aspects, the Force can be. Living Force, the first aspect is. Connects all living beings, it does. Here and now, it is. Past or future, it is not.” Yoda paused, allowing Rey and Luke to take notes. “Unifying Force, the second aspect is. Binds everything together, it does. Stars and planets; space and time.”

Rey quirked her head at Yoda, her interest peaked.

He was watching Rey closely. “Complex, it is. Difficult to understand, it is. Aspect of Unifying Force, visions are. Difficult to understand, they are.” His ears drooped ever so slightly. “Many interpretations there can be.”

“Could my coming here be part of the Unifying Force?”

Yoda rubbed his chin. Humming in thought. “Possible, it is. Uncertain, I am. Worry about it, you must not. Here, you are now. There, you used to be.” He frowned. “Answers not all questions have.”

Rey nodded, slightly disappointed. She understood what Yoda was saying, but deep down she wanted to know how she got here. She wanted to understand why the Force picked her to shoulder such a monumental task. She had hoped Yoda would have some answers for her. Something she could sink her teeth into. Something that explained the reasoning why a scavenger on a desolate planet was chosen instead of anyone else.

She was a nobody.
A nobody from nowhere.

Rey sighed as Yoda continued to lecture about the different aspects. Taking notes as he taught both she and Luke the ways of the Force.

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The weeks were spent with Yoda teaching the new recruits from hundreds of years of memories. Stories he told them of his time with the Jedi Order. Lessons he learned, that he wished to pass along to the new generation.

Everyday Rey and Luke’s time was split between Yoda and Obi-Wan. Mornings usually were lectures. Afternoons, lightsaber training. Spread throughout the day were multiple meditation periods.

Some days they’d get an afternoon off.

Today was one of those afternoons.

Rey wandered around the gnarly forest alone. Not used to spending time sitting around in one place for too long, she took the opportunity to learn about her surroundings.

She could feel critters watching her high up in the trees. Curious of the stranger wandering near their home.

Rey continued her exploration. Wiping the back of her neck as she trekked on. The humidity was ridiculous. Her hair was soaked. Clothing damp. She could feel the little droplets of water clinging to her skin as she travelled through the fog.

Stopping in the middle of an opening in the forest, Rey slowly turned around to take everything in. It was like the trees stopped growing for ten or fifteen feet all around her, leaving her in a sort of clearing.
It was eerily quiet.

No critters were here.

Unscrewing the cap of her water canteen, Rey took a long drink as she took in her surroundings. Vines hung from every which way with heavy strands of vegetation laying claim upon them. The sunlight was able to peek through the canopy, bringing life to the ground below.

Rey grinned as she felt the sunlight warm her face. After months of nothing, the little bit of natural light felt like an oasis.

She took another sip, quirking her head at a natural-looking entryway that the sunlight couldn’t reach. Rey frowned as she tightened the cap on her canteen. She couldn’t feel anything threatening coming from the dark entryway.

She couldn’t feel anything at all.

The Force was absolutely silent.

Palming her lightsaber just in case, Rey carefully and cautiously made her way through the opening.

It was strange.

A bubble almost. Situated in the middle of the gnarly forest. Completely silent, save for her breathing.

Rey readjusted her grip on her lightsaber hilt and took a step or two further into the area. She couldn’t get a feel for anything. Blind and deaf to the Force.

Unease began to pool in her gut.

She shouldn’t be here. This place was wrong.
Rey spun around and began to search for the way out. She had only taken a half dozen steps through the entrance, but she couldn’t see anything.

Laughter behind her.

She spun around once more in the direction of the laughter.

“Who — who’s there?” Rey winced at the sound of her voice. She shouldn’t be broadcasting her fear. She took a step closer to the sound.

More laughter. Sinister.

Dark.

Rey shivered from the seeping cold that was beginning to coat her flesh.

Her heart was beating powerfully. Rapidly. Ready to fight or flee at a moment’s notice.

Another few steps closer to the sound. Her legs moving on their own accord.

Rounding a bend, Rey came to an abrupt halt. Her breath caught in her throat. Her eyes grew in fear.

Directly in front of her was a man sitting proudly on his throne. Cloaked entirely in darkness, his attention was on a kneeling figure at his feet.

“Rise my apprentice.” A grin on his rotten face. Palpatine. The Emperor.

Rey’s stomach churned. This couldn’t be real. A hallucination. She had entered into the Dark Side Cave by mistake.
She swallowed her fear as the person kneeling slowly began to rise. They were wearing all black. Hood. Cape. Boots. Everything dark as night.

“Now...turn around and say hello to our guest.”

Rey’s eyes shot back towards Palpatine. His deathly stare was now entirely on her. His grin still evident on his decaying face.

Rey took a step back in shock. In fear.

“Yes Master.” A woman’s voice.

Rey focused once more on the apprentice as she began to turn around to face Rey.

Time slowed down. Seconds felt like hours as the woman came to a stop facing Rey completely.

Sharp cheekbones and sunken cheeks. Sunken bloodshot eyes. Sickly pale skin.

Rey couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t comprehend.

In front of her was...her.


More laughter from the Emperor. He was feeding off of her fear.

Her shock.

“Kill her.” An order.
Rey ignited her lightsaber in response. Ready to fight her way out of the cave.

Dark Rey smirked at the blue blade of the lightsaber before bringing her right arm up. A large lightsaber hilt was grasped tightly in her hand. Folded up like a switchblade.

The hum of an igniting lightsaber as red light joined blue.

Sparking blood red of a double bladed lightsaber. The instability of the blade identical to the one Rey saw in the hands of Kylo Ren.

Rey hesitated for a moment. Her eyes met the sunken ones of the apprentice in front of her.

Another smirk as the lightsaber unfolded into a saberstaff.

Rey took a step back in shock as the weapon was swung around, almost decapitating her.

She couldn't hold back her fear as she began to defend against the unrestrained fighting of the apprentice. Of her.

Blue and red blades coming together again and again. Spitting in anger. In hate.

Still Rey defended. Meeting every single blow with her lightsaber. She continued to retreat. Trying to figure out a plan. Trying to figure out how to get out of the dark cave. How to get away from the nightmare.

The apprentice was growling and grunting with each wild swing of her saberstaff. Animalistic.

Aggressive.

Her Master’s words running through her head. His advice to her about her own aggressiveness while wielding a lightsaber. His warning to her.
Rey continued defending against her dark self, watching closely for any sort of mistake. Any sort of opening.

*There.*

The saberstaff was swung high once again, aiming for Rey’s head.

Rey ducked, dropping low as she brought her lightsaber waist height and sliced into the torso of the apprentice.

A scream in pain before it ended abruptly as the apprentice fell. Dead before she hit the ground.

Blinking, Rey stared at the girl. The woman. Herself. Dead on the forest floor.

Silence.

*Palpatine.*

Rey looked around, her eyes darting every which way. She was alone. The Emperor was only there because of Rey’s fear of him.

The trial was completed. She disengaged her lightsaber.

“Rey!” A voice, strained. Quieted from the entrance to the cave. Obi-Wan.

Rey spun towards the way she came in to search once again for the way out. Huffing in annoyance as she spotted subtle light bleeding through the entryway.

She pushed through the opening and forced her way out of the cave.
Obi-Wan was standing in the middle of the clearing his lightsaber clutched tightly in his hand. His fear pulsing strongly around Rey.

Rey blinked once again, trying to come to terms with what she just experienced. In shock.

“I — I thought caves were made of stone. I couldn’t feel anything dark before I made my way inside. I couldn’t feel anything.” It sounded stupid to her ears, but she had no other excuse. Her stupidity almost cost her her life. It had, in a way.

She killed herself. Her dark self. Watched as the life left her body.

Rey’s lip wobbled. Her eyes stung as Obi-Wan took a couple of steps closer.

She began sobbing as he wrapped his arms around Rey. Hugging her. Holding her close. Trying desperately to calm her down.

“It’s over,” Obi-Wan murmured into her ear as she wept. “What was in there was not real. It was just a test. Just a trial.” He squeezed her tightly. “I’m so sorry. We should’ve showed you the entrance.”

Rey stood there, gasping for breath and she continued to sob. Her adrenaline was waning. The fight was over, but she couldn’t comprehend what had just happened. What she had seen.

Not really.

Obi-Wan continued to hold her. Murmuring comforting words. Trying to calm her down.

His words began to become muffled. Rey could no longer make them out.

She began to look around the clearing, searching for Anakin. She needed him right now. She needed her teacher.

Mechanized breathing filled her ears. Off to her right Anakin came into view. Pacing. Terrified.
“Master Anakin,” Rey forced out.

He jerked to a stop and looked at Rey, before making his way closer to her and Obi-Wan. His arms outstretched offering to hold her.

Rey peeled away from Obi-Wan. He offered her a slight grin as she stepped back from him. He too turned to face Anakin.

Rey took a couple of steps before she reached her Master’s arms.

“What happened?” Anakin was curious as he held Rey tightly to his chest.

She continued to cry, trying to make sense of what she just experienced.

“Rey found herself in a...dark cave,” Obi-Wan replied quietly.

“You can see each other?” Rey’s tears wouldn’t stop as she turned her head to look at Obi-Wan standing nearby, watching Master and Padawan closely.

“Just when we touched,” Anakin informed her. “I saw the inside of your vessel last time this happened. I can see...a forest around us now.” He shook his head at Obi-Wan’s alarm. “I don’t care where you are. I won’t come searching, I give my word.”

Rey felt him shrug as she slowly began to calm down.

“I don’t see anything familiar. I don’t know the location of where you are.” Anakin assured Obi-Wan.

Rey pulled away from Anakin ever-so-slightly. Wiping her cheeks.

“What did you see in the cave?” Anakin’s concern wrapped comfortably around her.
Rey couldn’t hide her shame. She looked at the life support panel on his suit instead of meeting his gaze. Her fingers ghosting over the buttons. “Me.” Quiet. A whisper.

Understanding hummed strongly from both Anakin and Obi-Wan. Anakin once again brought her in for a hug. Clutching her safely against his chest.

“And the Emperor.” She swallowed her disgust as her voice got stronger. She turned her head to the side, allowing her cheek to press up against Anakin’s shoulder armour. Obi-Wan had stepped even closer. Now only an arms-length away. “The slimy bastard ordered his apprentice to kill me. But...I killed her instead. She left herself open and I took advantage.”

Rey shivered.

“What about Palpatine?”

Rey shrugged. “He wasn’t there when I looked around after…” she swallowed, “after that. Then I heard Obi-Wan yelling for me.”

Silence for a few moments as the trio digested the information.

Rey nestled her cheek against Anakin, wrapping her arms around his torso. His touch brought her comfort. Peace. A question that needed to be asked was running through her head. She needed to know the truth. “Was that — is that, the future? My future?”

Anakin squeezed her even tighter. “It’s just a choice. You falling to the dark side is entirely up to you.”

Rey nodded. It wasn’t what she wanted to hear, but she knew for certain that her Master was telling her the truth.

Obi-Wan hummed. “I think our discussions are helping with your anger, Rey. I think it’s important that you don’t bottle it up. That you have a safe place to vent your frustrations.”
Rey blinked at Obi-Wan who was watching Anakin closely. An understanding was humming between them.

“Obi-Wan says your training is going well,” Anakin prompted her. “Yours and Luke’s.” He was trying to get Rey to think about something else.

Rey nodded, wiping her cheeks. “We can balance in a single-handed handstand with Yoda meditating on our feet. I lasted a few minutes at least. Luke a bit longer until I distracted him and he toppled into the swamp.”

Amusement wafted hard against Rey’s shields. Obi-Wan was chuckling at the memory of a few days earlier.


Rey raised a single brow in response. “Obi-Wan told me to.” She snickered lightly.

“I find failure is the best teacher,” Obi-Wan said by way of explanation.

“Of course you would,” Anakin chided him, not unkindly.

Rey began to peel herself from Anakin. Still careful to keep a hand on him at all times. “We should head back to Yoda’s home.”

Anakin nodded in understanding.

Rey frowned, looking down at the ground. Uncertain about what she had experienced in the Dark Side Cave. Uncertain about a lot of things.

A gloved hand moved underneath her chin, gently tipping her head back to look directly into Rey’s eyes. “What you saw was a choice, Rey. An unlikely possibility. Nothing more than that. I promise you.” A thumb rubbed her cheek. “I won’t let you fall. We won’t let you fall.” He gestured to Obi-Wan who was watching the two closely, rubbing his beard in thought.
He gave Rey a small smile, nodding his agreement with Anakin’s statement.

“Alright,” Rey conceded quietly.

Anakin looked at something beside him that Rey couldn’t see. A curt nod.

“I must go now Rey,” he told her quietly. “I’ve arrived at my destination. I need to check out a few things.”

“What is it?” Obi-Wan asked, frowning. “Where are you?”

Anakin shook his head. “I’m attempting to figure out a way to get eyes and ears on Sidious. I’ll fill you in later. I’m uncertain if it is even possible.”

He took a step away from Rey and disappeared entirely.

Rey turned her attention to the Jedi Knight standing next to her. Curious at his frown. He didn’t know what Anakin was doing. He didn’t like being kept in the dark.

Obi-Wan pinched the bridge of his nose, sighing. He turned his attention to Rey. “Let’s go have some dinner, shall we. A fair warning: Yoda will want to know what you saw in the cave.”

Rey nodded in understanding. Tucking her hand in the crook of Obi-Wan’s elbow, she sighed. “Lead the way.”
Hello!

Apologies for the wait for this chapter, real life had the nerve to get in the way.

I just want to give a warning for some explicit scenes in this chapter (it’s not really that explicit) that some readers may wish to skip. I’ve put part of the section in italics, about 1/2 of the way down. It’s a dream sequence... 😊

I hope you enjoy this chapter! ❤️

Cheers!

Vader quirked his head as he took in the small living quarters on Jelucan. The basic necessities were present without much more. A small dining table with seating for two in a tiny kitchen, a couch that was not much larger than a chair, a single bed was tucked in a room off of the main living area. Next to it was a standard refresher.

According to the bounty hunter he hired, this was the home of Raul Korraay, a former Baktoid Combat Automata engineer. One of the many engineers who fled with their research when the Galactic Empire took control of the droid manufacturing company.

He hoped that they’d be able to work together.

Vader smirked to himself. He wasn’t fooling anyone, especially not himself. They’d work together regardless of whether Korraay wanted to or not.

For now he’d wait for him to return from the market that was located in the center of the village. The man needed to eat and his cooling chamber was bare.

He sat down on one of the chairs in the kitchen. It squeaked ominously as he put his weight on it.

_Stupid cybernetics._
Minutes passed as Vader went over the mission plan in his head. It needed to succeed; failure was not an option.

A shadow moved in front of the small window at the front of the dwelling. Korraay was home from the market.

The door creaked open. Steps coming closer as the former engineer made his way further into the home. Quiet muttering as he adjusted the heating in his home.

The heater clicked on and began rattling as it started to heat up the small dwelling.

Still Vader waited. Surprised that his breathing apparatus hadn’t been heard yet.

Korraay came to an abrupt halt as he took a step into the kitchen. His eyes huge in shock as he took in Vader sitting at his dining table. His fear and dread were wafting hard against Vader’s shields.

Vader waved his hand, the remaining chair slid out from under the table. “Have a seat, Raul. We have much to discuss.”

“How?” The man croaked out as he set his foodstuff down on the counter and took a seat.

Vader quirked his head at the man. He almost felt sorry for him. He had hidden himself extremely well, but had recently gotten sloppy. Lonely. “Never trust a beautiful woman. Especially one who has shown interest in you.”

The former engineer snorted quietly. His eyes downcast. “What can I do for the Empire, Lord Vader?” His eyes met Vader’s behind his mask. The man wasn’t going to put up a fight.

Vader smirked. He was sacrificing himself to protect the other engineers who had fled from the Empire. He sat watching Korraay closely. He was loyal to his former coworkers; it was interesting to see. Vader shrugged at the man’s question. “Nothing.”
Confusion spiked, humming strongly around the room. “I beg your pardon, Lord Vader. I’m not sure I understand.”

Vader placed his hands in front of him on the table, clasped together as if he was having a discussion with an old friend. “I don’t wish for you to work for the Galactic Empire. I want you to work for me.”

Silence.

Confusion was still wafting around Korraay. He frowned before replying, “doing what, exactly?”

“What you were doing with Baktoid Combat Automata... just on a smaller scale.” Vader paused, watching Raul’s expression closely. He was taking a huge risk just speaking with him. “Droids.”

Vader watched as Korraay swallowed before replying. The man was nervous. Uncertain.

“I assume I don’t have much of a choice in the matter,” the engineer said quietly. He frowned, eyes narrowing. “How much smaller?”

“A handful of droids rebuilt to my specifications. Custom.” Vader quirked his head. “They need to fit in without anyone noticing them.”

Korraay nodded in understanding. “To spy on the Rebellion, you mean.” He nodded once more, exhaling slowly. “I can do that.”

If he came to his own conclusions, Vader wasn’t going to correct him. He grinned, once more thankful for his helmet. “Indeed. We must leave now. I have a ship waiting.” He stood up from the chair, motioning for Korraay to do the same. “Bring your food if you like... there’s no need to waste it.”

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Vader watched as Korraay began taking apart a maintenance droid. Carefully peeling off its protective shielding to get at the main controls.
“What exactly do you need in this droid, Lord Vader?” Korraay asked quietly as he set the metal casing on a side table out of the way.

“Video and audio recording mainly. I need it to be able to do its job, but I also need it to report what it sees and hears directly to me. Daily.” Vader crossed his arms across his chest. “It cannot be found out that it is a spy droid.”

Korraay nodded in understanding as he began to unclip some of the wiring. “From my knowledge, the majority of the rebellion scanners are not equipped with the latest upgrade in checking for spy droids.” He frowned, shrugging. “You likely wouldn’t have to try too hard to get one of these in a satellite rebellion base.”

Vader frowned. “If I wanted to do an average job at rebuilding spy droids I would’ve brought Kar Steppelen back from the dead.” He allowed his anger to leach out of his shields. He could’ve retrofitted the droid himself if he was only looking for something average. There was a reason he went searching for Korraay — the man was one of the top engineers in droid manufacturing. It was a loss to the Empire when he and his team of engineers disappeared.

He turned to look at the man standing in front of him whose eyes were wide in fear. “I found you because I need multiple droids to be deployed to various locations. I need them all to pass security checks. Imperial security checks is the benchmark that is needed. Coruscant standards.” He closed his fingers slightly, knowing full well that the man was now having a difficult time breathing. “The Rebellion has found a way into numerous Imperial strongholds, done irreparable damage, and have repeatedly gotten away.” He quirked his head at Korraay who was becoming flushed from the lack of oxygen. “I take it you haven’t heard of what happened to the weapons factory on Cymoon-1?” At Korraay’s jerky shake of his head, Vader continued, “the factory no longer exists. It was completely destroyed.”

He released his fingers, waiting for only a moment as Korraay took a deep breath. His eyes were watering from the strain. “While you are not officially working for the Galactic Empire, you are working for me. You’ll find that my standards are much higher than that of the Empire. Do not make the same mistake again, Raul. I will not be so forgiving next time.” He turned to leave the room before pausing. “I want to know about every single conversation, every mission planned... I want to know their innermost thoughts before they wake up in the morning, without anyone finding out. Am I making myself clear?”

“Yes Lord Vader,” Korraay rasped out.

Vader gave him a curt nod as he took a few steps towards the exit. “I look forward to watching
your progress.”

He didn’t wait for a reply as he left the room he had set the engineer up in. The stormtrooper guards saluted him as he exited. He nodded his acknowledgement as he made his way by.

Vader turned down the hallway and proceeded towards the command bridge of his Star Destroyer. He needed to check in with Montferrat, they hadn’t had a chance to really speak with one another over the last few days.

He needed to know where the Devastator and his soldiers stood. He needed to know if his second in command had any luck with the Death Squadron.

The doors slid open as Vader entered onto the bridge, Montferrat was standing with his back to him looking out at the stars.

“My Lord,” Jhared greeted him quietly. “How is our guest finding his accommodations?”

Vader came to a stop next to his second in command and crossed his arms. “Suitable, for now.” He blinked a few times, taking in the sights before him. “You’ve disposed of the bounty hunter, I assume?”

Montferrat gave him a curt nod. “I have. Will we be needing another?” He turned to look at Vader, waiting for his response.

Vader shrugged. “I am uncertain at the moment. Korraay and myself had a discussion. I was able to clarify a few things for him. Expectations. We will see what he does with that information.”

“How fortunate for them.”
Montferrat nodded curtly, a slight grin on his face. “I learned of a number of locations that the Death Squadron and the rest of the Navy have visited. Of course, after the fact. But it doesn't matter. Something is better than nothing.”

Vader nodded his agreement. “Where?”

“Llanic was one location. A skirmish happened above the planet a few weeks ago, I believe. Balfour was upset… complained to many people that the rebel scum had gotten away. There appeared to be some sort of mission on that planet… I’m uncertain what it was specifically.” Montferrat sighed. “The Death Squadron just returned from Shu-Torun. From what I heard, Tagge was sent to make sure quotas were being met. Once there, it was determined that the king had begun working against the Empire.” He turned to look closer at Vader. “He was, of course, executed and his daughter was crowned queen.”

Vader frowned. “To ensure control of the planet.”

Montferrat nodded. “That is what I assumed, yes.”

“What were the quotas for?” Vader quirked his head, he could look it up on his datapad later on if he needed to, but figured Montferrat would have already looked it up. “Do you know?”

The commander frowned. “Ore.”

Vader closed his eyes in understanding. “For future building projects within the Empire,” he finished quietly. Sidious was building the second Death Star… or was at least preparing to build it. He focused once more on his second in command. “Anything else?”

Jhared shook his head. “Nothing that you weren’t aware of before Jelucan.”

Vader nodded. “How are my soldiers?” He asked, changing the topic.

“Not bad,” Montferrat assured him. “The training sessions you have them participating in is definitely an improvement. I believe they look forward to them. Same with the tasking. The changing of the various roles is well received.” He sighed. “Having soldiers that can successfully do more than one task well is a good thing.” He shook his head. “I’ve never understood why trooper training only focused on a single job.”
“Bureaucracies,” Vader grinned.

Montferrat snorted quietly. “Indeed.”

Setting down his datapad, Vader waited for Mothma to reply.

Prior to Obi-Wan, Rey and Luke travelling to wherever Yoda had decided to hide, they had made sure that both he and Mothma were able to keep in contact with one another. Just in case the Rebellion needed to flee once again.

Vader had yet to message her with any sort of news, and was quite proud of that fact. But, no matter how much he didn’t like her, he knew that she and her rebels needed to be aware of what had happened on Shu-Torun.

His datapad alerted him of a reply.

Picking up the device, he logged in and opened up the file.

*Thank you for the information. It is greatly appreciated. Assume that the ore is for DS-2 or some other weapons manufacturing. Another weapons factory, perhaps?*

Vader frowned, he hadn’t thought of something other than the Death Star, but Mothma had a point. He continued reading.

*Do you know how long it took for DS-1 to be constructed? I know Rey said three or four years for the second, at least. But, could it have been longer? Building two at once? Are things speeding up like Rey mentioned?*

He rolled his eyes. He had no idea if things were speeding up or not. Neither did Rey. What he did know was that he was being left out of almost everything. While he and Sidious didn’t necessarily
get along, the fact that Tagge was leading the Death Squadron rather than him spoke volumes.

That was what had changed. His lack of participation in the battles against the Rebellion. Against anyone opposing the Galactic Empire.

Sidious assumed he was a spy.

Vader scowled behind his mask. Disregarding the plans for the second Death Star, he had barely helped the rebels at all. He was only helping Rey and his children. He didn’t care if everyone else in the rebellion were wiped out. Their deaths meant nothing to him.

The Republic Alliance was just as foolish as the Galactic Republic — Rey’s experience had been proof enough for him.

He began typing his response.

*DS-1 took two decades, at least. Saw the plans and construction at the beginning of the Empire. Construction had paused a few times to my knowledge. Issues needed to be sorted out. Financing, labour, etc.*

*Plans for DS-2 have likely been around for years. Contingency plans.*

*Possibility that ore is being used for other construction. Weapons, ships, etc. Likely the second Death Star is at least starting construction now.*

*Unsure if events are speeding up. Rey is only privy to a few events and a rough timeline. Not much else.*

He paused his typing and frowned. Uncertain if he should even ask Mothma. Shrugging to himself, Vader typed up his question for Mothma to read.

*How is the search for suitable healers and medical technology coming along?*
Vader tossed the datapad aside. He was tired and sore. He needed another rest in his bacta tank.

He called the command bridge.

“Lord Vader,” an officer greeted him.

“How much longer until we arrive at Mustafar?” He was getting impatient.

“An hour, sir.”

Vader gave him a curt nod of his head and ended the call.

He’d watch Korraay at work. Make sure he was doing his job appropriately.

Vader grinned as he got up from his seat and made his way out of his quarters. He enjoyed the intimidation that his suit allowed. Enjoyed the fear it evoked in people like Korraay.

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“I truly… deeply… love you and before we die I want you to know.”

As soon as the words left her mouth, Vader knew he was in a dream. A memory.

One that he didn’t want to wake from. Ever.

He could still taste her lips. Could feel the adrenaline as the two of them entered into the colosseum to be executed alongside Obi-Wan.

He didn’t want to fight anymore. Not like this. Not here.
He blinked.

He and Padmé were now in her bedroom on Naboo. The day after their wedding. The early morning sunlight was shining into his eyes as he took in his wife laying next to him.

She was sound asleep. Her hair a mass of tangles around her head.

She was never more beautiful than in this moment, without the extravagance that surrounded her in her daily life.

Simple and pure.

He grinned dryly as he rubbed his face. Not so pure anymore. Either of them.

He blinked once again and found himself grinning against Padmé’s neck as he nipped and kissed her.

Her soft mewling underneath him was making him hard. Her hands running up and down his body. Squeezing his ass. Pulling at his hair, tugging hard.

He winced as he gently pulled off of her. Both of them breathless.

“Do you trust me?” He could hear himself ask her quietly.

She nodded shyly, her face flushed. “I do… with anything.”

Another grin as he made his way down her body, nipping and sucking. Kissing. Humming.

He reached his destination at the apex of her thighs. Still breathless; still grinning. He kissed the inside of her thigh as he brought both of her legs up over his shoulders.
His eyes met hers. “Okay?” He wouldn’t go any further if she was unsure. If it was too much for her.

She nodded once more. Her eyes shining in anticipation. “Yes.” Barely a whisper.

He grinned once more before meeting her folds. Licking and sucking. Her gasping filling his ears.

A groan.

A whimper.

A hand in his hair pushing and pulling hard.

Her hips moving against his face as he feasted on her.

“Fuck,” he muttered into her folds as she came hard.

Carefully he pulled away from her. Untangling her legs from his shoulders as he slowly made his way back up her body.

Another whimper. Another groan.

Unfamiliar sounding.

He quirked his head.

Slowly his eyes found a face. Rey.

She was writhing around on the bed, her hand covering her mouth to keep herself quiet. Eyes scrunched closed.
“What the fuck?” He couldn’t stop himself. His shock reverberated around the bedroom.

Rey’s eyes snapped open.

Confusion and fear.

Embarrassment as she took in who was hovering above her.

The memory ended abruptly. The dream.

Vader found himself once again strapped into his bacta tank, floating in his bath.

Limbless. An oxygen mask providing him with the ability to breathe. On Mustafar.

Right... Mustafar.

Vader blinked. Trying desperately to come to terms with what had just happened. Trying desperately to understand.

Were he and Rey now sharing explicit dreams? Master and Padawan?

He grimaced. Their next bonding session was going to be uncomfortable. He hoped he hadn’t scared her. Disgusted her.

A knocking on the tank wall disrupted his thoughts. His droid was trying to get his attention.

“Master Vader… Commander Karbin is wanting to speak with you.” SD-2826 was just in front of his bacta tank. “He is on the Holopod right now.”
Vader winced. He gave his droid a curt nod of his head.

The exiting procedure began. His tank draining around him as the medical droids got into position.

He took a peek down his torso as the droids began attaching his arms and legs. His cock was fully hard, proudly jutting out from his body.

*Kriffing hell.*

The catheter was going to hurt.

He winced as one of the medical droids grasped his member none too gently and inserted the catheter before pulling on his briefs. His eyes were watering from the pain.

His suit was being pulled up quickly. His helmet slowly making its way towards his head.

“Three, two, and one. Deep breath.”

One of the droids pulled the oxygen mask off. His helmet taking its place seconds later. The hiss of his life support suit sealing shut, encasing him completely.

He blinked a few times, trying to gather his thoughts. Clear his mind.

Karbin had caught him off guard. His dream had caught him off guard.

He adjusted himself with his newly reattached hands as his droids draped his cape over his shoulders. Well aware that the Imperial Commander was watching the whole procedure with intrigue. Paying attention to every single detail he could find.

It made Vader uneasy. Like he was being searched for a weakness.
He frowned as he turned around and made his way around his bacta tank to greet Karbin, who was waiting on the Holopod.

Sidious must have given him the encryption to get into contact with him.

_Bastard._

Palpatine was giving him a message, Vader realised, showing him that Karbin was looking to be the Emperor’s new apprentice. That Vader’s place next to him was up for grabs.

“Commander Karbin,” Vader greeted him. His vocoder rang strong. He subtly began to take in what he could see from the Hologram.

The Mon Calamari cyborg acknowledged him with a curt nod of his head. “Lord Vader. The Emperor has tasked me with getting your aid on Vrogas Vas. Our spy indicated that the rebel scum are on the planet. I wonder if the Jedi who destroyed the Death Star is there.”

Vader frowned. It seemed… _off._ Why would Luke be there? Why would Ahsoka? He needed to check in with Mothma; they hadn’t communicated with each other in about a month. The ore on Shu-Torun was the last thing the two of them discussed. For now he just nodded at the Hologram. “I look forward to bringing the Jedi scum to the Emperor.”

Commander Karbin nodded. “As do I.” The Holocall ended abruptly; cut off as the Imperial Commander got what he wanted.

Vader turned to look at SD-2826 who was waiting near the doorway. “We must leave now. I need to speak with Mothma.”

The droid nodded and began rolling towards the waiting Lambda Class shuttle in the hangar. “Of course, Master Vader.”

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Rey stared at herself in the mirror in the little refresher on the transport vessel. Eyes huge in shock
as she tried to understand what the hell had just happened.

She shook her head at herself. She understood the *what* — she wasn’t that naive. She did grow up on Jakku after all. Had lived in group quarters with other scavengers near Niima Outpost until she was ten. She saw a few things and had heard a lot more.

What she didn’t understand was *why*.

Why was the Force connecting them in such a way? Why was their bond allowing the two of them to share dreams? Explicit dreams.

Swallowing, Rey exhaled slowly. She needed to speak with someone. Preferably Ahsoka… or Leia.

Rey scrunched up her nose. *No… not Leia.* That would be awkward. The Force hummed in agreement.

A knock at the door.

“Rey?” Obi-Wan called through the door. “Are you alright? You’ve been in there for quite some time.”

*Had she really?* Rey grimaced. “I’m alright,” she called out. Her voice cracking. She cleared her throat.

She cautiously opened the door to find Obi-Wan watching her closely. A worried expression on his face.

“You’re sure?”

“Uh huh,” she nodded. Self-consciously readjusting her sleepwear and her arm wraps. “I just had a dream, is all. It was strange.”
The Jedi Knight crossed his arms. Intrigue evident on his face. “Did you want to talk about it? Anakin used to have dreams. Nightmares.”

Rey allowed herself a grin. She could feel the heat rising into her cheeks, making them flush. “Mine wasn’t a nightmare. It was just… really private.” Now that was an understatement if she ever heard one. “I — I think Anakin and I are sharing dreams now.”

Surprise wafted around Rey. “Then we should talk about them… try to understand why they’re happening.”

Rey huffed. “Yoda will just say that not everything has an answer… that’s what he has always said about anything to do with our strange bond.” She frowned. “It was a really private moment. I don’t feel comfortable discussing it with Yoda. It’s really none of his business.”

Obi-Wan gestured for her to follow him into the tiny kitchen. “Then we don’t discuss it with him. You discuss it with me and together we can try to figure out what your shared dreams may mean.” He paused at Rey’s hesitation. “I don’t need to know specifics. I know Anakin well enough that I can put two and two together.” He sighed as he filled up the kettle for some tea. “It’s important that you don’t feel like you’re alone Rey. I know being here with Yoda is difficult for you. I understand where you are coming from. I do.”

Rey sat down on one of the chairs at the little table. “I just don’t appreciate being treated like I’m a Sith apprentice because I consider Anakin to be my Master and not you. I figured Yoda’s suspicion would eventually go away, but if anything it’s more prevalent the longer we stay here.” She swallowed. “And then the way he looked at me when I told him what I experienced in the Dark Cave…”

“I know,” Obi-Wan conceded quietly as he dunked the tea bags in each of their mugs. He moved over closer to the table, setting Rey’s mug of tea in front of her before taking his own seat. “Master Yoda is about nine hundred years old… he is set in his ways. He is unlikely to make any drastic changes. Believe me, I know.” He grinned slightly at Rey. “We’ve had plenty of arguments since we’ve arrived here, both him and I. He is very stubborn.”

Rey hummed in understanding. She could feel Obi-Wan’s frustration from time to time. Could hear the cutting tone in his voice occasionally when he spoke with Yoda.

Obi-Wan sighed. “Tell me about your shared dream… what happened?”
Rey frowned as she took a sip of her tea. She needed to choose her words carefully. Respectfully. She cleared her throat. “Anakin appeared to be dreaming of his time with Padmé.” Quiet, barely a whisper. “It started off when he was still your Padawan… I could see his braid.” Another sip of her tea. “He and Padmé were entering into this… colosseum. She confessed her love to him. Said that she wanted him to know that she loved him before they were executed.”

Obi-Wan narrowed his eyes as he sipped his tea. “Geonosis. The pair of them had come from Tatooine to save me after I got caught. Got caught themselves.” He hummed, a slight grin on his face at the memory. “I saw them kiss as they were pulled into the colosseum. That was considered to be the beginning of the Clone Wars.”

Rey nodded. “We quickly changed to another place… I’m not sure where exactly — somewhere sunny. A bedroom. A big, comfy bed. Lots of blankets.” She sighed. “Anakin was watching Padme sleep. It was the morning.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly, thoughts passing on his face. “Are you seeing things through Anakin’s point of view, or… something else?”

“I don’t know… I’m just there.” Rey frowned, once again self-conscious. “I could feel his feelings. His love for Padmé… among other stuff.” She could feel the heat in her cheeks once again. “The last dream was different than the others. The last scene.” She hesitated.

Rey looked sheepishly at Obi-Wan who had an eyebrow raised. “I think I was sort of in Padmé’s point of view. Anakin’s hair was longer than it was in the memories before.” She remembered the feeling as her hands tugged at his hair. The softness. “Some stuff happened. I couldn’t control anything — it was like I was a passenger experiencing what Padmé experienced. It felt like I was dreaming. I was just able to see and feel, nothing more.” She stopped to take another sip of her tea. “I made a sound after everything happened, and Anakin saw me and then I woke up.”


Rey nodded, but didn’t say anything more.

“Was he angry when he saw you?” Obi-Wan’s curiosity was strong.

Rey shook her head. “No, just confused. As was I. He swore and then I woke up.” She purposely left out how good it felt. How much she was enjoying their shared dream. How she tried to keep
quiet, but couldn’t. She didn’t understand why she had those feelings. What they meant.

Silence for a few minutes as the two of them nursed their mugs of tea. Rey was grateful for Obi-Wan’s lack of questioning about the content of the dreams, but was certain he could put together just what was going on in the last few minutes.

“I believe it’s just your bond bringing the two of you closer together,” Obi-Wan told her quietly.

Rey snorted. “It was a bit closer than I was expecting… than I was prepared for.”

“Perhaps the Force is having a bit of a laugh,” Obi-Wan suggested with a mischievous gleam in his eyes. “Your previous meetings have been the same for months now… perhaps the Force got bored. Decided to give you two a push.” He shrugged as he sipped his tea.

“You think we’ve stagnated,” she hadn’t thought of that. “That Anakin is stuck on the spectrum of light and dark.”

Obi-Wan grinned. “Perhaps,” he conceded.

“But… why his dreams?” Rey questioned quietly. “That’s what I don’t understand.”

“Memories,” Obi-Wan corrected, “not dreams. To remind him what it was like before he fell.”

“Do you honestly think that the Force is controlling his dreams, what he dreams about?” Rey was shocked. “That the Force truly has that much influence over one person?”

“First off, let’s ignore the fact that the Force brought you here likely to save him, which, in itself is quite a bit of influence over the two of you.” At Rey’s little nod of her head, Obi-Wan continued. “The Force also created him, Rey. He doesn’t have a father, only a mother.” Obi-Wan gestured vaguely with his free hand as he took another sip of his tea. “The Chosen One born to bring balance to the Force — that was what the prophecy said.” He hummed quietly. “I think a little bit of manipulation with his dreams is nothing compared to creating him.”

Silence as Rey digested what she had just learned about her Master. Obi-Wan was staring blankly
at the table, his mind elsewhere. “I didn’t know that,” she said quietly. “He never said anything when I was with him.”

“He wouldn’t,” Obi-Wan informed her. He sighed as he finished up his tea. “It wouldn’t hurt to speak with Anakin about what happened… he’s likely overthinking it. I wouldn’t be surprised if you begin to feel his anxiety flare up once again. Much like it did on the way to Crait.” He gave Rey a small grin. “He probably feels like he overstepped. Assuming, you’re alright with what happened, it would be a good thing to openly communicate with one another. Perhaps in person once again if we can.” He paused. “I think we will be leaving here soon. A gut feeling, if you will.”

Rey nodded in agreement; she had the same feeling. They needed to get back to the Rebellion.

“I’m going to suggest that you try to get back to sleep. Catch a few hours if you can. I’ve a feeling we are all going to need it.”

“Alright,” Rey responded quietly as she took the last sip of her tea.

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“Does anyone have questions?” Montferrat asked those present on the command bridge.

Vader was watching all of his officers closely, this part of this mission could not fail. It would be his head on a stick if Sidious was to find out what his apprentice was doing.

_Committing treason, _the Force excitedly said to him.

Vader closed his eyes, trying desperately to ignore the nervousness he had with stepping out against his Master. It was against everything that had been ingrained in his head. Since he was three years old.

“Can we run through it again, Commander Montferrat?” An officer asked quietly. “We can not afford any mistakes.”

The commander nodded. “We will take various shuttles here to get to our required destinations,”
Jhared began. “Three droids will follow Lord Vader into the Imperial Center — one general labour droid, one security droid, and one servant droid. Once they arrive within the center, the droids will be reporting for duty in their various positions.” He gestured to the man who had asked the question. “You — Officer Janak — are somewhat friendly with another officer on Commander Tagge’s Dreadnought. It is your responsibility to take the maintenance droid with you. Once you set foot on the Executor, the droid will report for duty with the other maintenance droids.”

“Who are you friendly with?”

Officer Janak grimaced. “Officer Saam. He’s my ex-boyfriend. He has some of my things that I need to get back. Personal things.”

“I take two droids with me onto the Tyrant,” Montferrat told the bridge quietly. “I need to speak with Captain Lennox. Since the Tyrant is here above Coruscant, it is understandable that we speak in person rather than over comms.”

Vader looked around the bridge. “Any other questions?”

Everyone shook their heads. “No Lord Vader. Our mission is clear.”

“Then I suggest we get to it.” Vader began leading the group towards the main hangar on the Devastator.

Sidious had requested that he come to Coruscant after the shitshow on Vrogas Vas. The Rebels had been able to flee — including Ahsoka and Leia — in their recently refueled ships. Vader would leave out the part of him helping the pair of them as they commandeered an Imperial shuttle to get off of the planet to safety. Commander Karbin was dead — Vader made certain of that when he defeated the Mon Calamari cyborg in a lightsaber duel on the desolate surface of the planet. Karbin’s Destroyer had been blasted out of the sky by Vader’s own Devastator. An order that he gave in absolute fury that he was beginning to question, but hoped that he could justify his actions if he needed to. Karbin was an arrogant fool and his arrogance had cost his soldiers their lives.

Vader ascended up the ramp into the Lambda-class shuttle along with the three droids he was responsible for deploying and a handful of troopers — to protect him from any sort of threat on his life.

Vader smirked as he sat down in the pilot’s seat. It was more for show than anything, but it needed
to be done. He needed to keep up appearances.

He pulled the shuttle out of the hangar and flew down towards Coruscant. Towards the landing platform set aside specifically for visitors to the Imperial Center.

Bringing the shuttle to land, Vader began the shutdown of the vessel. He could feel the nervousness of his soldiers… very few had ever set foot in the Imperial Center. Sidious had seen to that. The Emperor liked to remain in hiding.

He rose from his seat and stepped into the area where his soldiers and droids were waiting.

“Troopers!” They all snapped to attention. “Follow me into the Imperial Center. You will be stopped at the entrance. Wait for me there. Do not wander off.” He looked around at his men. “Is that understood?”

“Yes sir!” The group called out as one.

“Why are you guarding me?”

“To protect you sir!” They yelled out. “A threat has been made on your life sir! We are doing our duty for the Galactic Empire!”

Vader grinned. “Now we put on a show.” He turned to TK-9170. “Time to lead your men.”

“Of course, Lord Vader.” TK-9170 lowered the ramp and led his squadron out of the vessel.

Vader waited a moment, allowing them to get lined up properly before he followed behind with the three droids.

This was where the fun began.
“Are you sure you don’t want to come with us?” Obi-Wan asked Yoda quietly as the group said their goodbyes to the Grand Master of the Jedi Order.

Yoda shook his head as he clutched tightly onto his gimer stick. “Here my place is.”

Rey quirked her head, hesitant. Uncertain. “Perhaps one of us can come visit you on occasion.” She frowned. “You don’t have to be alone when…” she trailed off.

Yoda hummed, a grin on his face as he made his way over to Rey. “Old I am… few years left I have?”


“Hmmm… miss the excitement I do.” He shook his head once more. “Not on Endor my place is. Not on the Death Star. Here.”

“I will visit,” Luke spoke up. “It’s not healthy to be alone. I don’t care how old you are.”

“Luke —”

“No.” He turned his attention to Rey. “That’s what I did in your time, right? I saw Yoda before he passed on?”

Rey gave him a jerky nod of her head. “He was training you before you fled because you had a vision… eventually you came back here. You saw that he wasn’t moving around as quickly. Yoda informed you then that Leia was your sister.”

“A short time three years is,” Yoda told the room quietly. “Nine hundred, I am. The Force I have. Alone, I am not.”

Silence.
“Goodbye old friend,” Obi-Wan said quietly. “See you on the other side.”

Yoda gave him a nod. “May the Force be with you.”

“May the Force be with you.”

The three of them left Yoda’s home and made their way into the transport vessel.

“How do we get out of here without flying into anything?”

Obi-Wan sighed as he began the preflight checks. “Straight up until we breech the fog, then we can enter our hyperspace coordinates.”

“Back to D’Qar?” Rey asked as she buckled her harness.

Obi-Wan nodded. “That’s what Mon said… Anakin told Ahsoka on Vrogas Vas that they had another spy… they don’t want to leave until they’re identified.”

“How bad was it?” Luke questioned Obi-Wan from the co-pilot seat.

“Bad.” The vessel lifted off of the surface of Dagobah. Straight up through the fog. A few minutes of silence as Obi-Wan concentrated on his task. Breaking through the atmosphere he punched in the hyperspace coordinates and waited as the ship calculated its path. A bleep in the cockpit before they jumped into hyperspace. “Quite a large number of vessels in the Rebellion were refueling on the planet… they were extremely vulnerable when Commander Karbin’s Star Destroyer dropped out of hyperspace. They couldn’t flee.”

“How many did we lose?”

Obi-Wan grimaced. “Too many. Entire squadrons were wiped out. Ahsoka and Leia were there overseeing the refueling process… they are safe. But, they apparently crash landed on the surface of the planet and ended up having to steal a Lambda-class shuttle.” He sighed as he unbuckled his
harness and turned around in his seat to look at both Rey and Luke. “The *Devastator* showed up in the middle of the battle. Ahsoka told Mothma that as she and Leia were transferring over to the Falcon she saw the *Devastator* open fire on the other Star Destroyer.”

“Anakin — I mean Master Anakin,” Rey didn’t want to give Luke any ideas about her and his father’s relationship. “Master Anakin,” she repeated once more, “he ordered that? To wipe out the other Star Destroyer.”

She felt uncomfortable. Uneasy.

Obi-Wan nodded, humming. “He did. It sounds like he needed to make certain there weren’t any witnesses. Ahsoka and Leia likely didn’t just find a Lambda-class shuttle hanging around. They most likely had help.”


“We will know more once we return to the base.” Obi-Wan informed them. “Mothma mentioned that the location of the refueling base on Vrogas Vas was only known by a select few in the Rebellion — high command and a handful of pilots. They had to transport a number of the smaller ships in larger vessels — they didn’t want every single pilot to know where the refueling base was.” He looked at Rey with sad eyes. “The loss of the base is a huge hit.”

Rey frowned. “Do you think someone in high command is selling secrets? Or do you think it was one of the pilots who knew the location that told Karbin?”

“Gut feeling?” Obi-Wan asked Rey with an eyebrow raised. At her and Luke’s nod he continued, “I think someone in high command sold secrets to bargain for someone or something. Family perhaps… loved ones. Information. I don’t think they have been a spy since day one, or if they even are a spy. I think they needed to give Karbin, or perhaps Tagge something in order to get something in return.”

“You already have an idea on who it is.” A statement, not a question.

Obi-Wan hummed, shrugging. “I could be wrong. We will have to wait and see.” He sighed as he looked out the viewport. “If it’s alright with the two of you, I’d like to take the first sleep rotation… I’ve been up all night communicating with Mothma and speaking with Yoda.”
“Of course!” Rey didn’t realize he had pulled an all-nighter. “Luke and I can fly this thing just fine. Take as much time as you need.”

Obi-Wan gave the two a tired smile and made his way out of the cockpit. Luke slid over into the pilot’s seat, Rey took his spot in the co-pilot chair.

“Where did you learn how to fly?” Luke asked Rey after a few moments of silence as the pair of them began to familiarize themselves with the readings on the console in front of them.

Rey frowned. “I rebuilt a flight simulator in my home on Jakku. Moved it from one of the Destroyers that had crashed nearby. I was able to familiarize myself with a number of different vessels.” She shrugged. “Never actually flew off planet until I was nineteen. Before then, I mostly just stuck with speeders.”

“How’d you get off planet?” Luke’s curiosity was humming strongly. “Find a star ship lying around somewhere?”

Rey smirked, biting her lip to prevent herself from bursting out laughing. “I did actually… it hadn’t flown in years. Some horrid modifications were made on it… made it difficult to fly. The ship had been stolen by Unkar Plutt — my handler I suppose. He stole it from someone, who stole it from someone else… you know how it is.”

Luke had a slight smile on his face, but mostly he just looked confused. “The ship have a name?”

Rey nodded, unable to hide her smile. “I stole the Millenium Falcon, Luke.” Surprise wafted hard against her shields. He was speechless. “Some shady character stole it from Han… I got it back to him after me and Finn fled Jakku. Bumped into him and Chewy… and some Rathtars.”

He started chuckling. “Rathtars? Are you serious?”

Rey pursed her lips, humming. “Three.”

Silence as Luke took in what she was telling him.
“It’s how I got into contact with the Resistance — the Rebellion of my time — the Falcon in my time is famous. Legendary. Same with Han and Chewy. I knew of Han because of his smuggling — I think it was a characteristic of growing up on Jakku. Met loads of travelers there. Heard lots of stories.” Rey looked down at her lap. “My friend Finn… he knew of Han because of his role with the Rebellion. Finn was a stormtrooper who had defected… I didn’t know it at the time. Found out later on. FN-2187.”

Rey turned a bit in her seat to watch Luke digest what she had told him. “Where did you learn how to fly?”

“What?” Surprise at her question. “Oh uh… just on Tatooine. I fixed up a T-16 Skyhopper.” He shrugged. “When I lived there, I wanted to leave with my friends who were becoming pilots. A lot of them joined the Imperial Academy. I think it was a way to get off the dust bowl. Not necessarily because they supported the Empire.” He paused. “When Obi-Wan, Leia and I got to the Rebel Base, a childhood friend — Biggs Darklighter got me to test in the flight simulator. He had defected from the Empire after graduating from the flight academy. I hadn’t seen him in a few years.”

Rey swallowed. “He was killed above the Death Star… right?”


“I’m sorry for your loss.”

Luke gave her a sad smile and a nod. “He believed in the cause he was fighting for. It’s how he would’ve wanted to go. Fighting for something he believed in.”

The two chatted with one another as they approached the first hyperspace jump point. They’d have to jump four times before the last section of the trip to D’Qar.

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“Did you want to land us Rey?” Obi-Wan asked as they prepared for the final approach to D’Qar. “You’ll have to be careful with the asteroid belt, of course.”

Rey nodded. “Alright.” She plopped down in the pilot’s seat, Obi-Wan took up the co-pilot’s chair
to back Rey up just in case they came across something she couldn’t handle. Luke buckled his harness in the seat behind them.

The transport vessel blared its warning that it was about to leave hyperspace.

Rey clutched at the controls and held her breath.

The vessel dropped roughly out of hyperspace, rattling slightly in protest at the abrupt change in speed.

She maneuvered the ship through the asteroid belt surrounding the lush planet before flicking on the radio to hail the base nearby.

“Attention, attention. This is a friendly scavenger looking for a safe place to land. I repeat, this is the scavenger looking for a safe place to land. Awaiting your response.”

Silence for a few moments.

The radio cackled. “Attention scavenger. Safe place granted. Welcome home.”

Rey hummed as she made her way closer to the planet. She began running through the appropriate steps to safely bring the vessel to the surface of D’Qar.

She pulled up above the few parked vessels in front of the hangar and carefully lowered the Ghtroc 720 in an empty spot next to the Millennium Falcon.

“Home sweet home,” Rey muttered as she began the shut down of the vessel.

“People are anxious,” Luke muttered as he unbuckled his harness.

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement. “Everyone knows that there is a spy in the ranks. Puts them on edge.”
Rey nodded in agreement. She could feel the unease permeating all around them and they hadn’t even stepped foot in the base yet. It was going to be overwhelming.

She focused on her shields, checking to make certain they were strong, before unbuckling her harness and spinning around in her seat. “Well… no time like the present, right?”

She caught Obi-Wan’s grin as she followed Luke out of the cockpit. Obi-Wan bringing up the rear as they all grabbed their bags.

The loading ramp was lowered and the trio exited the vessel.

“I’m going to drop my bag off in my room and get washed up.” Rey looked between Obi-Wan and Luke. “I’ll meet you in the command center in a few minutes.”

Surprise wafted around the hangar.

“You want to sit in on the meeting?”

Rey nodded. “I need to figure out where and when everything is.”

Obi-Wan gave her a curt nod. “I’ll let Mothma know.”

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“How was your visit?” Mothma asked Obi-Wan quietly as Rey stepped into the command center and found a seat next to Ahsoka and Leia.

She looked around the table as Obi-Wan spoke to the chancellor. Grave expressions evident on each and every face.

The rebellion had suffered a huge loss.
Rey swallowed, uneasy. Uncertain.

“You’ll have to fill me in when this is all over,” Ahsoka murmured in Rey’s ear.

She met Ahsoka’s gaze and gave her a nod.

Mothma cleared her throat. “Good afternoon everyone.” She waited until she had the attention of everyone present in the command center. “I would like to fill everyone in on what happened at one of the Rebellion’s refueling locations. I am aware that many here are not entirely sure of the specifics of what went down a few days ago. It is important that everyone is brought up to speed.” She clicked on the Holopod, allowing everyone present to see the planet characteristics of Vrogas Vas. “Vrogas Vas was the location of one of the Rebellion’s most important refueling bases — given its strategic location and uninhabited status. A location that has now been found out by the Empire.”

She looked around, eyes narrowing at those in the room. “Because of someone’s inability to keep its location a secret, be it because of a loose tongue or espionage, that location is no longer suitable for this Alliance.” She clicked the remote in her hand and the Hologram changed — a long list of names and ranks were now present for everyone to see and read. “Eighty seven people. Pilots and technicians helping with the refuel.” A pause as she let her words sink in. “Overall we have lost all of Blue Squadron, all of Yellow Squadron, all of Grey Squadron.” She took a deep breath before continuing, “all of Amber Wing, all of Delta Squad, and many other Rebel troops helping with the refueling.”

Silence.

“We were lucky.”

Rey looked at the chancellor who had tears in her eyes.

“We were lucky,” she repeated in response to a few shocked expressions. “My contact informed me that Commander Karbin and his stormtroopers were aware of the base. They informed me that we were about to be attacked.” She sniffed. “Without that warning, we would’ve been caught with our pants down. Without that warning, it is highly likely that every single person there would’ve been slaughtered.”
“I would like to use this tragedy to remind everyone here that what is said in this room, stays in this room unless cleared through me.” Mothma cleared her throat. “What is discussed in this room is not to be discussed in the mess hall over dinner. It is not to be discussed with your buddy in the hangar. Nor is it to be discussed with your lover in the bedroom.” A poignant pause. “Is that understood?”

“So what you’re saying is: much like the Empire and the Emperor, you are the one who gets to control the flow of information. Not us.”

Rey’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead. She could feel the anger pulsing from General Madine.

Mothma sipped her caf as she took in the Special Forces General. “Short answer? Yes.”

Madine snorted in disbelief. “Why?” He crossed his arms across his chest.

“But you disagree,” the chancellor prodded him. “Tell me what you think I should be doing, Crix.” She clasped her hands together and waited for him to respond.

“Tell us who your contact is,” he blurted out. “If we know who they are, we can work together and end the Empire quicker. They are obviously someone high up in the Imperial ladder.”

Mon shook her head. “Not happening. The more people who know of my contact’s identity, the greater the threat is on their life. I am not willing to risk that just to ease your discomfort of me
knowing something you don’t.”

“So you’ll prolong the war to protect them?” Madine shook his head. “Whose side are you on?”

Mothma chuckled dryly. Her eyes cold. “Prolong the war, you say? Tell me Crix, do you think that destroying the Death Star, the weapons factory on Cymoon-1, the slaves freed by Obi-Wan, Kes, and Han, among numerous other missions... do you think that was all for nothing? Do you honestly believe that us doing that is to prolong the war?” She jabbed a finger in his direction. “Say we drop a dozen missiles on Coruscant... on the Imperial Center... the Emperor dies — if we’re lucky, but everyone else is still alive. The Death Squadron, with their probe droids to hunt us down. The rest of the Imperial Navy with more weapons than we could possibly dream up. Not to mention the numerous sympathizers throughout the Core, Mid and Outer Rim planets.” She shook her head. “The second Death Star is being constructed as we speak... we don’t know where. Commander Tagge likely does though. Maybe he’ll take over the reigns and blast us all to smithereens when he gets it up and running.”

“Then how in the hell are we going to win this war Chancellor?” Madine asked quietly, his frustration evident to all in the room.

“Politics,” Mon smirked at him. “We get people on our side. We help them like we have been doing. And we fight back hard when we need to.” Her eyes met Rey’s. “We’re the Republic Alliance — the direct opposition to the Galactic Empire. If we do this right — if we do it smart — we can win this thing and have worlds on our side as we do. Not just the Core Worlds. Mid and Outer Rim ones. Inner Rim ones. We fight for an Alliance that is representative of everyone. We rebuild the senate to include those people who were ignored before. We work together rather than against.” She turned her attention to the rest of the room. “That is how we will win this war.”

Breha cleared her throat. “The fighting — the battles that the Rebellion are fighting — those are just one step in defeating the Galactic Empire. An extremely important step, absolutely. But there are hundreds of other steps — other missions or aims — that need to be taken to successfully defeat the Empire. To successfully overthrow the dictatorship.” She looked around the room. “If we fail in those missions, those aims, the dictatorship will always come back. Always.”

“Like a pesky weed,” someone muttered quietly.

Breha nodded her agreement. “Exactly. We need to pull the roots out to get rid of the weeds. Only trimming them back will allow the weeds to fester and regrow if we don’t pay them enough attention.”
Silence as high command comprehended what was being said.

Ahsoka sighed. “That’s all nice to hear, and I’m glad the goals of the Republic Alliance have been clarified. But, we still need to address the bantha in the room. Someone shared classified information — either mistakenly or with malicious intent. They need to be found and questioned.” She smirked. “So… which one of you blabbed?”

The room erupted. People were shouting. Rey heard a few derogatory terms being thrown out at Ahsoka for her blunt questioning. Her accusations.

The screech of a chair’s legs against the stone floor. Slowly Davits Draven stood up from his chair. “I did. I leaked the information.”

Rey could feel the shock reverberate around the room. She stole a glance at Obi-Wan who was rubbing his beard, watching Draven closely. A calm expression on his face. His suspicion was confirmed.

“Not maliciously,” Draven continued. “But my actions led to the deaths of those eighty seven people. My actions led to the loss of our refueling base.” He cleared his throat. “I made a mistake. I made a grave error in judgement.”

“Why?” Mothma’s anger betrayed the calm tone of her voice.

Draven looked down at the floor. “I was attempting to get information that I was told was extremely vital to the success of the Rebellion. I was played a fool.”

“What was the information?” Obi-Wan questioned him quietly. “You must have had some idea if you believed it worthwhile to trade the information that you did.”

“Flight plans. I was told that the information I was given were the flight plans for the entire Imperial Navy.” Draven shook his head at himself. “It was… from ten standard years ago.”

Ahsoka hummed. “Do you still have the datacard?”
Draven nodded as he reached into his pocket. He tossed the togruta the datacard.

“How certain are you this information is from ten years ago?” She asked him as she gestured for Obi-Wan’s datapad.

Draven rubbed his face as he sat back down heavily in his chair. “The name of the file. It had the year in it. I wasn’t able to read the name of the file until the refueling base was already under attack.”

Ahsoka nodded absentmindedly as she plugged the card into the datapad.

Rey leaned over to take a closer look.

“You’re certain it is safe to open?”

Draven nodded. “The file is clean. No malware is present. It’s just useless information.”

Ahsoka clicked open the file. “We may still be able to ascertain something from this information. The Imperial Navy is extremely structured. Regions of space are usually under a specific commander’s control. They all have breaks. All have rotations. It is how me and a few of my contacts were able to communicate without anyone finding out.”

Rey hummed, remembering what Master Anakin had told her. “Two months on, two weeks off. Only rarely is that not followed. The Emperor can overrule the routine if there is something he deems more important.”

“Like hunting for the Force user who had destroyed the Death Star?” Ahsoka asked her with a small smirk. Purposely leaving out Anakin’s orders to search for Luke and Obi-Wan prior to the destruction of the Death Star.

Rey nodded. “It depends on the commander where the Destroyer will dock for the off-rotation period.” She frowned at the table. “Coruscant and Mustafar for the Devastator, for example. That is well-known to everyone here, I believe.” A few people nodded their heads in confirmation. “If we figure out who patrols which location, we may be able to figure out the likely location of the second Death Star.”
“Because the Emperor will have his most trusted guarding it,” Mothma chimed in. “We can send scouts to check out potential regions after we take a look at this information. See if the regions are guarded by the same commander as it was a decade ago.”

“I assume that it takes more than a couple of years to build a Death Star,” General Grafis told the room quietly. “Not that I am an expert in that field.” He held up his hands in a placating gesture. “But building something that large will leave behind evidence. It will take time. Perhaps the routes will tell us a story of where and how these monstrous weapons are being built. Where — besides Shu-Torun — the Empire is getting their supplies.”

The group murmured their agreement. This was something they could hopefully use to their advantage.

“We can look through this Draven,” Ahsoka told her former handler quietly. “Maybe it wasn’t for naught.”

Draven nodded. His eyes refusing to meet anyone.

“We should still have a chat,” Obi-Wan said quietly to the Intelligence General. “We need to figure out who you were trading information with. Who could be at risk.”

“Of course.” Draven cautiously rose up from his chair once again.

Rey frowned. She didn’t understand what was going on.

“Rey,” Obi-Wan called to her, a keen expression on his face. “Would you like to come with us to watch. You can view it as part of your training.”

*Oh.*

Rey nodded curtly and stood up from her seat.
“Here,” Ahsoka said to her as she ejected the datacard from Obi-Wan’s datapad. “Take this with you, just in case.” She gave Rey a wink as she handed Rey the device.

Rey clutched it in her hands as she made her way around the table, following Obi-Wan and General Draven out of the room.

She followed them into a secluded holding cell. A small bunk and two chairs were all that was present.

Draven sat down on the bunk. Obi-Wan gestured for Rey to sit as he closed the heavy, durasteel door. He pulled his chair slightly closer to the Intelligence General, but still gave the man plenty of room.

He sighed as he sat down.

“You knew it was me.”

Obi-Wan nodded. “I had my suspicions. I figured if there was an actual spy here, it was more likely they’d be after Luke or Ahsoka. Not after information about Vrogas Vas.”

Draven nodded his agreement. “I honestly believed I was in contact with someone I could trust. The information they supplied before was true. I swear.”

Rey quirked her head. Keen to know who had double-crossed the Intelligence General.

“Do you know their name?” Obi-Wan asked quietly. “Or perhaps a call-sign?”

Draven nodded. “Firmus Piett. He is a First Officer in the Navy. I believe he is stationed on the same ship as Commander Tagge.”

“The Executor, ” Rey murmured to herself.

“Let our mutual contact know,” Obi-Wan turned his attention to Rey sitting next to him. He
gestured to his datapad in her hands. “Ask if he knows anything more about Piett.”

“Um…” Rey swallowed, her throat tight. She wasn’t comfortable with speaking with Master Anakin. Not after what the pair of them had experienced a few nights earlier. She made to hand the device over to Obi-Wan. She didn’t know what to say to Anakin. She didn’t know how to make it any less awkward.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “You send the message. Not me.”

Rey sighed as she flicked on the screen of the datapad. She opened a new file. “What should I name the file?”

“Vrogas Vas,” Obi-Wan suggested. “It’ll get his attention.”

Rey gave a curt nod as she began to type up a short message to her Master. She could feel Draven watching her closely. His intrigue was humming throughout the small holding cell.

She pursed her lips as she began to proofread before sending the message off.

Back home.

Learned who had traded information. Obi-Wan is questioning them now.

Does someone by the name of Firmus Piett sound familiar? What can you tell me about them?

She nodded to herself. It seemed fine. She hit the save button and waited for a reply.

She looked to Draven and Obi-Wan. “Now what?”

“What other information have you traded to Piett?”
Draven frowned. “Not much. He asked if you were with the Rebellion. I figured that it wasn’t something that was a secret — you had already made the recruitment video with Ahsoka.” He sighed. “For that information, he informed me of a handful of locations that the Navy would be at during specific times. Mothma knew of this information — I told her as soon as I found out. It helped us. Kept us safe. Hidden.” He looked between Obi-Wan and Rey. “I had no reason to think he was going to attack the refueling base. Piett said he wanted to switch sides. That he had seen what the Empire could truly do and he wanted out.”

“He didn’t attack the base though,” Obi-Wan told him. “He ordered Karbin to attack. Karbin’s Destroyer was probably closer.”

“I’m an idiot.” Draven muttered to himself. “I’m a kriffing moron. I got played by some Imperial sleezebucket. The bastard is probably sharing a bottle of Corellian whiskey with Tagge, chatting about how stupid I am.”

The datapad bleeped a response before anyone could reply.

Rey clicked the file open.

*Piett is a snake. Ambitious and arrogant. Was just made Admiral for Commander Tagge on the Executor. Imperial through and through. Will fight for the Empire until the day he dies. Loyal.*

*Ass-kissing is his forte along with Tagge. The two make quite the team. Manipulative. Untrustworthy to those in the Imperial Navy as well. Will stab them in the back to move up in the ranks.*

*Is this Rey? Can we talk?*

“What does it say?”

Rey read the short message out loud to them, leaving out the two questions her Master asked at the end. It was personal, for her eyes only.
Obi-Wan rubbed his beard.

Draven frowned. “No love lost between Piett and whoever your contact is.”

Obi-Wan shook his head in agreement, before grinning slightly. “You still don’t know?”

“Well… I have my suspicions… but I do understand the need to protect your contact.” Draven shrugged. “I’m not as much of a prick as Madine is. He’s an incredibly insecure man. If you were chancellor of the Alliance, he wouldn’t have put up such a fuss like he did with Mon.” He sighed, looking down at his hands in his lap. “What’s my punishment, General Kenobi? Same as the last person who sold information to the Empire?”

Obi-Wan frowned, shaking his head. “I’m not going to kill you. I need to wait to see what Mothma and the others will decide. I did want to check out what you told me though. Double check things to make sure you’re telling the truth.” He quirked his head at Rey. “Did you want me to walk you through it — what I’m doing, or did you have something else to do?” He gestured at the datapad clutched in Rey’s hands.

“I have someone that I needed to speak with,” Rey admitted quietly. “I can’t avoid it. I just need some advice from Ahsoka before I do so.”

Obi-Wan nodded his agreement. “Alright.”

Rey stood up from her seat and made her way out of the holding cell. She had already experienced having her mind read back on Starkiller Base. She remembered the pain and intrusive feeling the prodding brought her. It wasn’t something she wanted to witness as a spectator. Not today.

Quietly Rey made her way back towards the command center, datapad still clutched tightly in her hand.

She gave the door a sharp knock and waited for someone to let her in.

After a moment, the door creaked open, allowing Breha to greet Rey with a warm smile. “Come in dear. We’re just finishing up.”
Rey followed her inside, giving her thanks as she made her way by Breha to return to her seat next to Ahsoka.

“So… to summarize: Our technicians are about to analyze the datacard to see if we can obtain any useful information from it. Hopefully Draven’s foolish mistake can help us in the long run.” Mothma tapped her fingers on the table. “We all voted on keeping Draven here. We will watch him closely, question everything he does — but we all agree that our Intelligence General is not a spy. He made a grave mistake that cost us a lot of people.”

The chancellor focused on Rey. “Did he tell you the identity of the individual who he had traded information with?”

Rey nodded. “Yes.”

“Who?” Mon gave her a kind smile. “You can tell us — I give permission.”

“Firmus Piett,” Rey informed the room. “He apparently has just been made Admiral on Tagge’s Star Dreadnaught, the Executor.” Rey frowned. “Our contact said that Piett is an arrogant, manipulative snake. That he is the type of person who would stab anyone in the back to move up in the ranks. He’s Imperial through and through.”

Mothma nodded slowly. “Perhaps his arrogance will cost him. I do hope we can find out something from the datacard.” She winked at Rey. “Out of sheer pettiness I’d like to see the look on his face when he realizes his information helped lead to the collapse of the Empire.”

The room chuckled quietly.

“This brings us to the end of our meeting.” Mothma nodded as she gathered her things. “Thank you all for your time.”

Chairs screeched against the stone floor as high command began to exit the room.

“You want to catch up?” Ahsoka asked Rey quietly. Her concern was evident on her face.
Rey nodded, eyeing the datapad in her hands. “I need some advice. Without judgement. Some stuff happened between me and,” she looked around the room, “Anakin,” she whispered. “Private stuff.”

Ahsoka’s eyes grew larger. She gave Rey a nod. “Let’s go talk outside. Away from everyone, alright?”

Rey nodded as she stood up from her seat to follow the togruta out of the command center.

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“You’re sharing dreams?” Ahsoka’s surprise pulsated around the area.

Rey curled her arms around herself, self-conscious. Uncertain. She nodded. “Obi-Wan said that they were likely Anakin’s memories of his time with Padmé.”

“Oh Rey.” Understanding hummed strongly. “What happened?”

Rey shrugged. “It started off on Geonosis. Anakin and Padmé went there to rescue Obi-Wan. They got caught. Apparently that was the beginning of the Clone Wars.” At Ahsoka’s nod, she continued. “Padmé was confessing her love to Anakin. Then it switched to another place. There was a big bed with lots of blankets. It was morning, I think. I’m not sure of the location, but both Anakin and Padmé were in bed. Padmé was sleeping, Anakin was watching her sleep.” She looked down at her lap. “During those parts it was like I was just there… but unable to interact. It was like I was watching a HoloNet program… a really personal one.”

“What about the other parts?” Ahsoka reached over to squeeze her hand.

“It was as if I was Padmé,” Rey admitted quietly. She swallowed, her throat dry. “I couldn’t control what was happening… but I could feel everything. It was like I was… I dunno… in her mind, watching and experiencing everything that unfolded.” She frowned. “I could feel Anakin kissing my neck. He asked if Padmé trusted him before he began kissing his way down her body. Down my body. He started kissing and licking my… bits. I mean Padmé’s…” Rey paused for a moment, trying to gather her thoughts. “It — it felt really good. I was enjoying myself.” Ahsoka squeezed her hand once more in understanding. “I must have made a noise or something, because Anakin heard me. Not Padmé. Me. He swore when he saw me there and the dream ended.” Rey sniffed. “I woke up on my bunk all tangled up in my blanket.”
Rey focused once more on the datapad in her lap. “He wants to talk… but I’m afraid of what he’ll say. He must hate me.” She looked at Ahsoka. “Everything happened so fast, I swear. I didn’t really know what was happening until it was too late. I didn’t mean to intrude.” She swallowed, her throat tight with emotion. “What if he wants nothing to do with me? What if he doesn’t want to be my Master anymore because of what happened? I don’t know what I would do.”

Ahsoka wrapped an arm around Rey and pulled her in for a hug. “He won’t reject you. He’s not that kind of person, Rey.” She sighed. “He likely just wants to make sure you’re alright.” Another squeeze. “He is probably blaming himself.” She rubbed Rey’s back before carefully pulling away.

“I can talk to him if you like,” she offered. “Let him know what you’re feeling. I do need to thank him for helping Leia and I get off of Vrogas Vas. He saved our lives. Karbin had cornered me and Leia as we were both trying to get out of our mangled ship. I was still pretty shaken up from the crash landing. Hit my head really hard on the console.”

Rey sniffed. “You’d do that?” Her voice was shaky with emotion. She cleared her throat.

Ahsoka nodded, holding her hand out for Rey to give her the datapad. “Of course I will.”

Rey exhaled slowly before handing Ahsoka the datapad.
Chapter 25

Rey hummed as she brushed her teeth, making sure to reach the ones in the back of her mouth. Toothpaste was frothing at her mouth as she spit spectacularly into the sink. She cupped some water in her hands and slurped loudly, rinsing out the minty taste of her toothpaste.

She spit out the water into the sink before taking a peek in the small mirror in front of her.

Anakin was watching her, eyebrow raised. Amusement etched on his scarred face. His helmet was off, indicating he was sitting in his hyperbaric chamber.

“Master Anakin!” Rey whispered excitedly as she spun around to face her Master directly. She took a step towards him before stopping abruptly, suddenly remembering what had happened the last time they saw each other.

He closed his eyes, sighing quietly, before focusing on her. “I don’t hate you Rey,” he rasped. “I’d much rather speak with you than Ahsoka about this, although I do understand your embarrassment.”

Rey swallowed, nodding. She sat down on the toilet seat as gracefully as she could. She could feel the heat rising into her cheeks. The memory of what happened between them running through her head. “I apologize for intruding on your memory.” Quiet shame, woven in with her embarrassment.

Anakin shook his head subtly, the neck guard of his life support suit preventing any more movement. “It was from a long time ago.” He took another short breath. “How’d you know it was from a memory?”

Rey scrunched her nose up. “Obi-Wan.”
A grimace. “You told him what happened?” Anakin’s embarrassment was pummeling against her shields.

Rey shook her head. “The first bit only. Ahsoka knows about the rest.” At his confusion she elaborated. “Geonosis was the first place, Obi-Wan said. The start of the Clone Wars. He saw you and Padmé kiss before you were brought into the arena to be executed alongside him.” She wrapped her arms around herself, self-conscious.

Anakin frowned. “You were there?”

Rey nodded. “It was like I was watching a scene from a show on the HoloNet. I saw your Padawan braid.”

“My rat tail,” Anakin muttered quietly, snorting at the memory.

“I don’t know where the other places were.”

Her Master grinned dryly, eyes crinkling. “Naboo. The morning after our wedding night. That was the place with the sun shining and the bed.” At Rey’s nod, he continued. “And then after that was on Coruscant. In Padmé’s place. Our place. Our home.”

Rey wrapped her arms tighter around herself, nodding.

“I apologize for disgusting you,” Anakin told her quietly.

“Y-You didn’t disgust me.” Rey shook her head. “It just caught me off guard, is all.” She could feel her blush. Annoyed that her cheeks were betraying her. “I understand if you don’t wish to have me as your Padawan anymore.” She could feel Anakin’s shock envelop her. “I get it if it’s too awkward for you.” Quiet acceptance.

This was the ‘normal’ for her. The abandonment. The rejection.

She wouldn’t let it break her.
“Rey, no,” Anakin rasped out. “I’m not rejecting you. Please don’t think that way.” He frowned at her. “I’m not your mother or father. I’m not my children from your time. If you wish to remain my Padawan, then I will remain as your Master. It’s that simple. We can work through this awkwardness.” He paused, a slight grin on his face. “Eventually.”

Rey nodded. Unable to speak.

“When did you begin to feel what was happening?” Hesitation humming strongly. Anakin was curious, but cautious. He didn’t want to push her.

Rey looked down at the floor. “When you were kissing Padmé’s neck. My neck.” Surprise wafted hard against her shields.

“I apologize for overstepping the boundaries between Master and Padawan.”

Rey shook her head. “You didn’t.” She hesitated. “Well… you did technically, but you didn’t know I was there.” She swallowed, nervous about what she was about to say. “I-I enjoyed it.” A quiet confession. Her eyes met Anakin’s own which were widened in surprise.

His mouth popped open before closing once again. He blinked. “Oh.” His shock evident in that one short word. He blinked once more.

“I don’t understand why I did. Enjoy it, I mean.” Rey rambled on. Focusing hard on her hands. On her fingers. Pushing hard through her embarrassment for what she knew she needed to say. “I mean… I know why. I’m not that naive. I lived in group lodging until I was ten. I heard things.” She shivered at the memory before frowning and shaking her head. “I just… I don’t… I’m so confused.” She rubbed her cheeks. “I’ve grown attached.” She swallowed, her throat tight with emotion. “And it absolutely terrifies me. I don’t understand where that attachment — that kind of attachment — is coming from. It’s like it’s just come up out of nowhere.” She sniffed. “I mean… I cared about you before, I’m not denying that. But this feels like so much more than that, and it’s really very confusing.” She paused, remembering what Obi-Wan had told her right after it happened. “Obi-Wan said the Force could be having a laugh. That it’s pushing you and me because nothing has happened in a while.” She shrugged. “I-I’m not sure how I feel about that to be honest with you. I like you… a lot… and now I’m not sure what to think.” She finished quietly. “Stupid Force,” she muttered.

She took a timid peek at Anakin sitting before her. Understanding written on his face.
He blinked. Rey swallowed.

“I-I can’t…” he frowned, choosing his words carefully. His hesitation plain to see. “I’m not the man in that memory; I’m not the man in that dream. I haven’t been that person for a really long time. I can’t pleasure you like that Rey. Like what happened in my memory.” A quiet confession. “My suit prevents that from ever happening.” He gestured to himself. “I have my heart monitor and breathing apparatus that is supposed to stay attached at all times, unless I’m in my bacta tank. I have cold, unforgiving cybernetic limbs — without flesh, preventing me from touching you like I’m supposed to.” He gestured to his lap. “I have a fucking catheter shoved up my cock so that I can piss without taking off my suit.” He blinked once again, watching Rey closely. His eyes watering. “I’m fed through a fucking straw — nutrients and water, everything I need to survive — so I don’t need to take off my helmet to eat. Because I can’t take off my helmet to eat.” He paused, holding on tightly to his emotions. “I can survive inside my suit Rey, but I cannot survive outside of it. Not for very long.” He was watching her with sad eyes. “Not to mention I’m old enough to be your father.”

“But you’re not my father,” Rey insisted quietly. “And you won’t always be in your suit.” She tucked a loose strand of hair behind an ear. “Mon is working to find you updated… parts.” She frowned at her word choice. “Updated cybernetics and heart monitoring. Lungs.”

Anakin shook his head, a knowing half-grin on his face. “Mothma isn’t doing anything with that Rey. I highly doubt she’s even begun searching for the appropriate healers and medical technology. She’s been avoiding my questioning about it since day one. She doesn’t even know what I need to survive outside of my suit.” He swallowed. “I’m flattered that you feel that way about me, as confused as you are, but don’t waste your time waiting for me. You’re young. You deserve someone young and whole like you. Not someone broken like me.”

Rey was silent, tears threatening to fall. She didn’t know what to say. Didn’t know what to do.

“I’m not rejecting you Rey. I promise,” Anakin insisted. “I just know that it wouldn’t lead to anything good. That your infatuation, Force influenced or otherwise, wouldn’t lead to anything good for you.” He peered at Rey, eyes begging to be understood. “If you wish to remain my Padawan, I would love to remain as your Master. I don’t want to lose that.” He gestured to her. “But I also understand if you need time to reconsider.”

Rey shook her head. “I want that still. I do. We can work around this awkwardness.” She swallowed, her embarrassment humming around the refresher. “I apologize for confessing what I did. I apologize for making you uncomfortable. For putting you on the spot.”
Anakin gave her a small smile. “You’ve nothing to apologize for. I appreciate your honesty. It’s important that we are able to communicate with one another, regardless of how awkward it can be.”

Rey nodded in agreement.

“We’re going to be okay?” Curiosity hummed strongly.

Rey nodded once more. “Yes. We will be okay.”

Her Master blinked, giving her a subtle nod of his head before he blinked out of existence. Their bond visit had come to a close.

Rey remained sitting on the lid of the toilet as she got her emotions back under control. Taking deep breaths to center herself once more. Testing her shields to make certain they were strong.

She cleared her throat as she pushed herself up from her seat. Focused.

She and the Chancellor needed to have a chat. Sooner rather than later.

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Rey stepped into the command center, spotting Breha and Leia sitting around a small table on the side of the room with Mothma. Obi-Wan was making tea. Ahsoka and Luke were chattering with each other, oblivious to Rey entering the room.

She grabbed a chair from the center of the room and dragged it across the stone floor. Its legs screeching in protest. Pushing the back of the chair against the wooden table, Rey sat down backwards on the seat. Facing Mothma directly.

The room went silent. Tension taut throughout the room.

“Pardon the interruption,” Rey deadpanned. Her eyes cold.
“Rey?” Obi-Wan’s concern humming strongly.

Rey waved the door closed with a snap. She quirked her head at Breha, Leia, and Luke before focusing once again on the Chancellor. “How’s the search going for updated medical tech for Anakin?”

Mon’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead. “I —”

“Keep in mind that I just finished speaking with my Master, where he informed me that you’ve refused to answer any of his questions regarding the deal you made with him.” Rey clasped her hands together, waiting for Mothma to reply.

“We —”

“I mean… you don’t even know what he needs.” Rey shook her head at the Chancellor. A small smirk on her face. “You haven’t even asked him what he needs in order to survive for more than a couple of hours outside his suit.”

“Now listen —”

“It’s almost as if you don’t care,” Rey interrupted her once more. “It makes me question how honest you were with me and your plans for my home world. Your plans for all the non-Core worlds that the Republic had ignored and forgotten about before. All your promises, your assurances — all banthashit lies.” She shrugged. “It’s like you want people to help you without any expectation — any payment — in return.” She snorted. “Typical politician. Always looking out for yourselves.” She glared at the Chancellor, aware of the anger pressing hard against her shields.

Mothma waited a moment before replying. “Helping Vader is not a priority right this moment. Surely he can survive a little while longer in his suit. What’s a few more years?”

Rey scowled at the woman. “Dangerous. Especially considering this time ‘round he is regularly feeding you information to help the Rebellion rather than attempting to slaughter you all and kidnap Luke. If he is found out, he will be struck with Force lightning by the Emperor. I can assure you, Palpatine won’t hold back. Anakin won’t survive it. He won’t even make it back to his ship to get basic medical care.”
“You don’t know that,” Mothma hissed.

Rey raised a brow, crossing her arms across her chest. “I do, actually.” She let her statement ring loudly in the silent room. “Luke dragged him all the way to an escape vessel just as the rebellion were attempting to destroy the second Death Star. They got as far as the loading ramp before Anakin pleaded with Luke to remove his helmet because he wanted to see Luke with his own eyes before he died.”

Silence as the occupants took in the harsh, blunt truth.

“Have you at least started searching for help, Mon?” Obi-Wan asked quietly. His hurt evident in his voice. “Please tell me you have.”

Rey refused to look away from the chancellor. Her hatred humming strongly through to her bones.

A hand was placed on her shoulder. Ahsoka gave it a gentle squeeze. “Don’t let your anger cloud your mind, Rey. Please don’t.” The togruta bent over to look at Rey closely. “I know you’re upset. I’m upset. But you cannot let your hate for the chancellor control you.”

“She lies,” her voice cracked. “I can’t trust her. I can’t trust anything she has said,” Rey forced out. Her tears threatening to fall.

A throat cleared. “Perhaps not… but you can trust me.” Breha reached for Rey’s hand. She gave it a squeeze.

Rey cautiously turned her head to look at the former queen of Alderaan.

Breha smiled at Rey. “I may no longer have a world to supply Anakin with the medical help that he needs, but I do have the connections to help find it.”

“Mama —”
Breha held up a hand to silence her daughter. “I don’t know if I understand everything you’ve said. Quite frankly, I’m not sure I want to know. But, I do know that it is the Alderaanian way to help someone in need. Anakin is in need. I can help him. I want to help him.”

Rey’s lip quivered. She blinked, allowing her tears to fall to her cheeks. “You’d do that?” She asked as Breha took her in for a hug.

Breha hummed as she rubbed Rey’s back. “It is important to help those who help us. All who help us, regardless of their past. I am aware of the fact that he attempted to prevent the destruction of Alderaan. I know that he protected Leia above Scarif. And Luke above the Death Star. Helping him would be a small price to pay. Having Anakin on our side is important to our success, I feel it in my bones. I may not be Force sensitive like all of you are, but I do know when to listen to my gut. My gut tells me to help Anakin Skywalker to the best of my ability, so I will do so.” Rey sniffed as she burrowed her head into the crook of Breha’s neck. “Bail will agree with me once he returns from his search for Alderaanian survivors.”

Rey nodded. Her face hidden behind her hands. She was tired — so tired of the distrust. Of the sneakiness of it all.

“They are important to you, anyone can see that,” Breha continued in a soothing voice, “I am positive you are important to him as well.”

“It’s complicated,” Rey sobbed out. Her tears flowing freely. “He’s old.” She sniffed.

Breha hummed. Rey could feel her amusement. “Well… he’s not that old dear. He may just feel that way because of his suit. All the more reason to fix him up, don’t you think?”

Rey sniffed some more, embarrassed at what she had blurted out loud.

“Has he told you what he needs?” Breha asked Rey gently. “Even if it was just the basic things for now. It gives me something to start with.”

Rey swallowed, her throat tight with emotion. She cautiously pulled away from Breha, wiping her eyes. “His breathing apparatus — I think his lungs are damaged from the heat, from the ash on Mustafar. He wears the helmet because he needs to have filtered air to not damage his lungs any more than they already are. His heart monitoring system — it makes sure his heart keeps a steady pace.” A pause as she tried to take control of her emotions. “His limbs don’t fit him properly.
They’re old. Too big for him. Too heavy. They’re something you’d find in some shady medical center for cheap.” Another deep breath. “His bacta is garbage… he still has open wounds on his head. Scars on his body.” She shook her head. “He’s spent over nineteen years getting treatment — his wounds should’ve been healed by now.”

Breha squeezed her hands. “What else?” Her thumbs rubbed the back of Rey’s hands in a calming gesture.

Rey frowned. “Um… I think his eyes are sensitive to light. He blinks a lot when he is without his helmet on.” Quiet, as everyone present let Rey get herself back under control. “I-I can’t think of anything else right now.”

Breha nodded at the information given to her. “I can begin to make a few inquiries to see what is available; see who we can trust.”

“You’re going to go around me to help Vader?” Mothma questioned Breha. “He’s a monster.”

“He’s also my biological father,” Leia snapped at the chancellor.


“Would you say that I’m a monster as well?” Leia rose a single brow at Mon, her voice quivering with emotion; with anger. “I mean… I do have a temper — much to mama and papa’s dismay. I’m handy with a blaster — didn’t even flinch when I killed those troopers on Vrogas Vas. I have far too much anger in my bones for someone who has lived a life as fortunate as I have.” She gestured to Mon. “Am I a monster like my father, Mon? I do share half of his genetics after all.”

“That’s not —”

“It is.” Luke’s tone was firm. “Father did some really horrible things — I’m not denying that. He’s killed hundreds of people… thousands possibly. Men, women, and children — he didn’t discriminate. That is something he will have to live with for the rest of his life. Those actions. Those decisions.” He frowned. “But there are people here in the rebellion, who have also done awful things. You’ve welcomed them in with open arms. You’ve allowed them to redeem and atone for their actions in the past. You’ve given them a chance to fight for what is right.” Luke shrugged. “It makes you a hypocrite if you refuse to help my father — our father. He’s helped you repeatedly; he’s risked his life for the rebellion and is continuing to risk his life. And you’re just
going to tell us that he isn’t worthy of our help because of some long-standing personal hatred you have for him?” He shook his head as he crossed his arms. “I’m sorry, but if this is a democracy like you claim it is, I’d like to vote you out.”

Silence as the room digested Luke’s words.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. “Perhaps if we get Breha to help with Anakin’s medical care — his future medical care, I mean — and you Mon, stick to your other responsibilities. I realize that you are shouldering a lot. I realize that you are severely overwhelmed. Let Breha do this, you don’t have to have any knowledge of it if you don’t wish to.” He shook his head sadly.

“You can deny knowing what actions I’ve taken to help save his life Mon,” Breha said quietly. “Plausible deniability if someone should ask you what happened when the Senate is eventually rebuilt.” She gave a small smile to her longtime friend. “How does that sound?”

Mothma sniffed before clearing her throat. “You are willing to risk your reputation for that… man?”

Breha nodded. “My reputation is nothing compared to the importance of my family.”

Rey sat watching as the chancellor slowly began to comprehend what they were saying. The realization that every single person in the room would go behind her back to help Anakin, regardless of whether or not she gave her approval.

“What’s it gonna be, Mon?” Ahsoka asked quietly, her hand still on Rey’s shoulder. Making certain she was calm.


Rey stood up abruptly, her gaze hard as she took in the chancellor of the rebellion. “Then I’m done here, I’ll spend my time helping Breha and Leia and Luke, but I will no longer be wasting my time helping you.”

She stepped away from her chair, from the table, shrugging Ahsoka’s hand off her shoulder as she did so. She spun around to make her way back out of the command center. Furious.
“Rey wait,” Obi-Wan called out. His worry humming strongly around the room.

Rey shook her head as she pushed the door open.

She could just catch the murmuring behind her as she made her way down the hallway back towards her assigned quarters. She needed to clear her mind. Needed to calm down. Her shields were cracking as a result of her anger towards Mothma.

She needed to rebuild them before they broke completely.

Palming open her bedroom door, Rey made her way to the center of the room and began to sob. Heart wrenching sobs as she felt her walls begin to crumble.

“Rey,” Obi-Wan’s quiet, calm voice sounded directly beside her as he placed a hand on her shoulder to give her an anchor. “Rey, you need to listen to me. You need to focus on my voice and rebuild your shields.” A short pause. “Do you think you can do that? Do you think you’re able to do that?”

Rey swallowed, shaking her head. “I can’t,” she sobbed. “I can feel them crumbling… I can’t focus.”

“May I help?” She could feel his deep concern. Obi-Wan was worried.

A shaky nod.

A hum as the Jedi Knight gently placed his hands on either side of her head, facing her directly. Waiting for her to give her consent. Her approval.

Another nod.

Ever so gently, Obi-Wan slid into Rey’s mind.
We will rebuild these together, Obi-Wan murmured in Rey’s mind as he began to gently construct a stronger, thicker wall of durasteel. Do you think you can do that?

I can try. Quiet. Shaky.

Rey began to lend a hand to Obi-Wan. Making sure her damaged shields remained somewhat upright. She couldn’t afford to lose them completely. The Emperor would jump at the chance if he sensed her. The Rebellion would be at risk of being completely eliminated because of her failure.

I apologize for my anger in there, Rey told Obi-Wan as they propped up a new durasteel wall. She began building the support for the wall, making certain it wouldn’t tip over at the slightest provocation.

There’s no need to apologize. I feel the same way as you do. Amusement hummed gently around her mind. I’m just better used to dealing with politicians than you are. I’ve have decades of training, both in the Force and dealing with manipulative, untrustworthy politicians. A gentle tap as he checked the new wall they constructed. We will work around it. We will figure it out, with or without Mon.

I just assumed that because she was with the Rebellion she’d be different, Rey thought as they began to slowly and carefully rebuild her damaged walls.

A common misconception, Obi-Wan told her gently. Do you know what happened with Leia during your time when everyone found out she was the daughter of Darth Vader?

Rey frowned. She was kicked out of the Senate, basically. Officially she left on her own accord, but from what I could tell — what my General told me — she was forced out.

Obi-Wan nodded, humming quietly. And where was Mon during all of that?

Oh. Rey gave a mental sigh. Covering her own ass, making sure she wouldn’t be affected by the scandalous news that one of the Rebellions key figureheads was the daughter of the Emperor’s weapon.

Another wall was repaired, the cracks welded together by both Rey and Obi-Wan. Together they moved onto the third wall in her mind to rebuild.
Indeed. Obi-Wan chimed in dryly. *She’s a politician first and foremost. Don’t forget that.*

Rey grinned as they completed the repairs of her third wall. *You sound like Anakin.*

Amusement wafted hard in her mind. *Who do you think he learned it from?*

Rey nodded in understanding. They were almost finished with her shield repairs.

*I spoke with him earlier,* Rey informed Obi-Wan quietly as she wielded two pieces of durasteel together. *Anakin, I mean.*

Obi-Wan hummed as he held the piece of wall in place for Rey. *And? How did it go?*

Rey grinned. *We’ll be okay. We both want to remain as Master and Padawan. Anakin said we can work through the… awkwardness. Eventually.*

A grin as the final piece was welded into place. *Good. I’m glad to hear that.* Another gentle tap on her shields. *I think you’re alright now. How do you feel?*

Better, Rey thought quietly. *Still angry, but knowing that I’m not the only one makes me feel better.*

Obi-Wan nodded and gently pulled out of her mind.

Rey sighed as she became aware of her surroundings once again. Ahsoka was sitting on the solitary chair with her feet propped up on the tiny desk.

“Allright Rey?” The togruta asked with a kind smile.

Rey nodded. “I’m feeling better, yes.”
“How are Luke and Leia?” Obi-Wan asked as he took in Ahsoka.

She shrugged. “Giving Mothma a piece of their mind along with Breha. I figured they should be able to have a go at her since he is their father after all.” She yawned, shaking her head at the two of them. “Politics,” she grimaced.

Obi-Wan sighed. “I’ll go check in with them. Make sure nothing escalates too drastically.”

Ahsoka grinned as the Jedi Knight left the room before focusing once more on Rey standing before her. “So… you spoke with Anakin, did you?” A mischievous look on her face.

Rey sighed, nodding as she sat down on her bunk, clutching her fluffy pillow.

“And?” Ahsoka prompted her.

Rey shrugged. “We both agreed that we wanted to remain as Master and Padawan. That we would work through the awkwardness.”

Ahsoka crossed her arms across her chest. “That’s it?” Disbelief evident in her tone.

Rey nodded timidly. “He said he doesn’t hate me. That he wasn’t rejecting me like my parents did.”

Silence for a few moments as Ahsoka digested the news.

“Did you talk at all about the dreams? Or did you two just keep it vague that you’ve done with Obi-Wan?”

Rey shook her head. “We talked about them. Discussed them. He didn’t realize that I was there during the Geonosis part. It surprised him.” She shrugged before continuing. “He informed me that the second part with the bed and sunshine was the morning after his and Padmé’s wedding night on Naboo. And that the memories afterwards were on Coruscant in his and Padmé’s home.”
“Alright.”

Rey nodded to herself, focusing on the floor in front of her. “He said that he wasn’t the man in the memories… that he hadn’t been that person in a really long time. He said he wouldn’t be able to... pleasure me like he was supposed to because of his cybernetics. Because of his suit.” She frowned, running her fingers through the fluffy pillow. “He said he was flattered, even if it was just the Force having a laugh, but that I deserved someone whole. Not someone old and broken like him.” She sniffed as she finished her explanation. “I’m still really confused about my feelings. I don’t understand why the Force would do something like that. I don’t know how I feel about it influencing my feelings towards my Master.”

Ahsoka hummed. “Assuming that it is the Force that is influencing your feelings. Maybe you just have feelings for him.” She shrugged. “Either way it’s nothing to be ashamed about. The Anakin I knew had a huge heart. He cared a lot about so many people.”

Rey sighed tiredly. “I’m not used to people who care.”

Ahsoka nodded in understanding. “Perhaps the bond that the two of you have is influencing your feelings. Your Force bond or whatever Obi-Wan is calling it.” She shrugged. “Being that connected to someone in such a way will influence your feelings without a doubt. I would think Anakin is feeling the same way. Or similar, at least. He’s likely just as confused as you are. And he’s likely feeling guilty about it too, given your Master-Padawan relationship and age difference.” She sighed. “I agree with Anakin — and you — that you both should focus on your Master-Padawan thing. Focus on that; on helping each other. Figure out how to end this war. Whatever the Force wants for you two can wait until after the Empire falls.” She paused, deep in thought. “Maybe we can visit Anakin in the not-too-distant future with Breha. It might be good to see one another in person again, rather than just communicating via datapad or Force bond.”

Rey nodded her agreement. “I need to get my Padawan braid redone.” She gave it a tug. “It’s growing out.”

Ahsoka gave her a curt nod. “There you go. We have an excuse for you to meet with your Master.”

Rey swallowed, her mind a whirlwind as she went over everything that had transpired. “You don’t think I was too harsh on Mothma?”

Ahsoka snorted. “Nope.” She shook her head as she took in Rey. “I had no idea she was ignoring Anakin like that. She played everyone there for a fool. All because of her personal hatred for him.” She frowned. “Or, more likely than not, because of politics. If anyone were to find out that she
helped him, her political career would be over.”

“And she wants to be Chancellor of the New Republic when the Galactic Empire falls.” Rey finished quietly. “The leader of the Senate. The bringer of peace to the galaxy.”

Ahsoka hummed. “Exactly. She needs to make certain she’s as clean as can be.”

“Stars... I hate politics,” Rey muttered mostly to herself. “Why can’t people just help others because it’s the right thing to do? Because of the kindness in their hearts?” She asked Ahsoka tiredly. “Why does there always have to be a catch? A payment? Who cares about the repercussions? Just do what is right and ignore the banthashit rules.” She frowned, shaking her head.

“Because too many people are afraid to take that leap of faith,” Ahsoka told her with a knowing grin. “People are afraid of the potential repercussions, and because of that fear they completely miss out on the potential rewards.”

Rey shook her head in annoyance. “People are stupid.”

Ahsoka snorted. “I agree.” She stood up from her seat and slowly made her way out of the room. “Get some rest, Rey. I have a feeling we will have a lot of work to do in the coming days.”

“G’night.”
Chapter 26

“How bad is it?”

Bail grimaced. “Bad. We barely got away from Tureen VII before the blockade was in place.”

Mothma sighed, rubbing her temple. “The people of Tureen will be punished for aiding the Rebellion. We must find a way to break it down.”

Obi-Wan hummed quietly. “What has become of the flight plans for the Imperial Navy? Were we at all able to determine any sort of pattern, or information from the datacard?”

Jaa Cardon, the slicing specialist within the Rebellion, nodded slowly. “Not all of it has been analyzed yet. There is quite a bit of information. Too much of it, really.” He placed a hand on the table. “But we have found out some information. Quite a bit of the flight routes have remained the same in terms of who is responsible for what region of the galaxy.”

“Is there any particular region that stands out in terms of isolation from the rest and a lack of resources to defend?” Obi-Wan questioned. He was beginning to have a plan.

A ridiculously crazy plan, but a plan nonetheless.

“What aren’t you saying?” Mothma asked him dryly as she took a sip of her caf.

Obi-Wan huffed, trying to hide his grin. “Well… it's a rough idea at best, but…” he shrugged. “I was thinking: what if we overtake an Imperial vessel and break the blockade with it?”

“Hijack, you mean,” Draven corrected amusedly. “You want us to hijack a Star Destroyer and ram it into the blockade. Take out the blockade and whatever part of the Navy that is above Tureen, to liberate the people of Tureen VII.”

“I wouldn’t have worded it like that exactly. But yes, in a nutshell, that's what I mean.” Obi-Wan rubbed his beard. “I’m not saying to hijack the Executor or anything, but perhaps if we focus on a smaller vessel with a less favoured commander.” He shrugged. “It might be something to look at.”
Mothma pursed her lips for a moment in thought before slowly nodding in agreement. “I agree that it is something that we should look at. Perhaps we can restock our fighters with some TIEs as well considering we still haven’t recovered from our fleet losses on Vrogas Vas.” She looked around the table at the other high command members. “What does everyone else think?”

“I agree with the idea,” Colonel Zavor replied quietly. “But, it’s something that needs to be planned extremely thoroughly… we cannot afford to lose any more of our fighters.”

“I concur,” echoed around the table.

The Rebel Alliance had come to an agreement. A moment or two of silence as everyone present came to an understanding of the risk they were about to take to help out the people on Tureen VII.

“I have a couple of ideas in terms of possible Destroyers,” Cardon piped up. “There was definitely a pattern in terms of who is favoured within the Navy and who isn’t.”

“Who isn’t?”

The man grimaced. “Not specifically who, but more like what Destroyer isn’t favoured. We cannot tell from the data we have just who is commanding the vessel.”

“Which vessels then?” Obi-Wan was curious.

“The best bet, I believe, is a Destroyer that has been assigned the same region for the past nineteen or twenty years. We scouted the area last week and it is still there.” Cardon sighed. “It’s located in the Northern Reaches of the Mid Rim, and all it ever does is circle around the Bright Jewel system; around Ord Mantell and its moons. It never really goes anywhere else other than Coruscant occasionally.”

“Ord Mantell is a dive,” Draven informed the room. “It’s an exceptionally shady planet with everything from bounty hunters to spice runners to hardened criminals looking for some work.” He grimaced. “It’s rough. Dangerous.”

“It could work though,” General Madine stated quietly. He was frowning as he thought the rough
plan through. “We have a decent number of vessels that would fit in with those travelling to Ord Mantell. They wouldn’t seem out of place.”

“Catch them off guard… take out the reactor.” A pause. “Jettison it out before it blows. The crew will evacuate once they realize the reactor has been hit. We can just slip in and take control of the vessel. Tow the ship closer to Tureen to help take out the blockade. It will be able to travel, just not with hyperspace abilities any longer.” Obi-Wan sighed. “I think it’s the best plan we have.” He looked towards Cardon. “You have the name of the Destroyer?”

The slicer hummed. “The Harbinger.”

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. He’d have to ask Anakin if any of his spy droids were on that particular vessel. He frowned at the vagueness from Anakin’s earlier messages. He’d only mentioned he had engineered a handful of spy droids which were now keeping him updated on the goings on of the Imperial Navy and the Emperor. Nothing more than that.

*He’s making sure the droids can’t be traced to him*, the Force murmured quietly to Obi-Wan. *He doesn’t want his treason to be found out until he is ready. It’s nothing personal.*

“We should bring in the pilots that will be taking part in this mission,” Mothma informed the room. “Colonel Zavor, would you be able to gather your people and bring them in here?”

Zavor stood up from his seat. “Of course. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

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“You’re insane!” Han scoffed loudly once he heard the plan.

Obi-Wan smirked at Han’s indignation. He wasn’t too far off with his beliefs.

“It can be done,” Luke argued with him. “I can make the shot. It’s a weak spot on those Destroyers. The reactors are extremely vulnerable.”

“Because no one would be stupid enough to even try to fire on them.” Han sneered at Luke. “It’s
suicide. Ridiculous.” He shook his head. “Don’t try it, kid.”

Luke huffed. His Anakin was beginning to show. He knew that he was a good enough pilot to succeed.

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard as he watched his Padawan closely.

“I can make the shot. I know I can.” Luke frowned at his friend. “But... if you’re too afraid I suppose you can be the one to let Leia know that you won’t take part in the mission.” An eyebrow quirked as he waited for Han’s response.

He glared at Luke. “Fine! But I’m only taking part to protect your ass… like I did above the Death Star.” He placed his hands on his hips. “You’re welcome, by the way.”


Chewbacca roared in laughter, slapping Han hard on his back.

The room collectively chuckled in response.

“We must go over the mission in extreme detail before we even try to hijack the Harbinger,” Zavor stated. “We won’t get a second chance if we fail.”

Obi-Wan nodded his agreement as the room began to plan out each and every step of the mission.

He pulled his datapad out of his cloak pocket, making eye contact with Mothma, making certain she understood what he was about to do.

She gave him a subtle nod of her head. They needed to check in with Anakin to make sure his spy droids weren’t on that particular vessel.

Obi-Wan began typing up a short note to his former Padawan.
Blockade above Tureen VII due to their aid for the Rebel Alliance.

Planning a mission to hijack a Destroyer to break the blockade. The Harbinger.

Are your droids present on that particular vessel? In planning stages currently. Will carry out mission within the next few days. Possible week.

He saved the message and tucked the datapad back in his pocket. Sipping his caf, he listened to the ongoing discussion of the mission as he waited for Anakin's response.

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Vader almost choked on the nutrient water he was sipping as he read the message sent to him from Obi-Wan.

Shaking his head, he typed up a reply to Kenobi.

This mission idea reeks of something you would do. You all are insane — you especially. If you ask me, you’ve spent far too much time out in the suns while on Tatooine. You need to see a healer.

That being said, the droids are not on the Harbinger. Commander Tenkalla is an incompetent fool. Ignorant of most everything going on in the Empire. He is stationed in the Bright Jewel system to keep him out of the way of far more important things than spice runners and career criminals.

Good luck.

He tossed aside his datapad and continued his meal in silence. Closing his eyes in relief as he went over what he had learned from the handful of droids he and his men had placed strategically on the two Starships and in the Imperial Center.
There was no indication at all that Sidious believed that he was feeding information to the Rebellion. The fact that he was leaving him out of certain meetings appeared to just be due to the fact that he hadn’t told him about Rey.

Sidious was protecting himself from potential assassination. The Rule of Two was something he took extremely seriously.

Vader grinned slightly. He’d let Sidious sweat for a bit before trying to kill him.

Now wasn’t the right time. The Force agreed with him.

Something important was about to happen. That would be the proper time to kill Sidious.

What bothered him was the lack of information about the second Death Star. Having just come from Endor, he realized that the construction of the superweapon must have begun at another location. One neither he nor Rey had any idea about.

It was also apparent that neither the *Executor* nor the *Tyrant* had any part in the protection or construction of the superweapon. There must be another player that he didn’t know about that was responsible for the protection of the building location of the weapon.

Someone Vader had overlooked.

It made him somewhat uneasy. Annoyed that he hadn’t yet figured out just who it was.

He shook his head at himself.

It was no matter, really. He just didn’t like not knowing everything that was going on. He never did.

Perhaps once the *Devastator* reached Geonosis he’d be able to find some clues as to which Commander was overseeing the construction of the second Death Star. He needed to retrace the steps of the construction of the first Death Star, and unfortunately for Sidious, Vader knew each and every location where the weapon was built. If he was lucky, the current construction would be
He blinked a few times as he sat alone at the table in the center of his quarters. He was tired.

Tired of his suit. Tired of the Empire. Tired of Sidious.

He was tired of everything. He wanted it all to just… end.

“Master Anakin?” A quiet, curious question. He hadn’t heard his and Rey’s bond open up.

He turned slightly to look at his Padawan.

He grinned as he spotted her curled up on the seat near to him. “Rey.” She was clothed in what appeared to be mechanic overalls. “Are you working on your ships?” He gestured to her.

She nodded hesitantly. “I was. I’m taking a bit of a break right now.” She sighed. “I’m hiding in your TIE currently. I needed some peace and quiet.”

Vader nodded slowly. “You’re not taking part in the mission planning?”

Rey shook her head. “I want no part of that. I just want to make certain that our pilots are safe. Anything more than that I’m not interested in. Too much… politics for my liking.” She sniffed as she crossed her arms across her chest. “You were right about Mothma.”

Vader frowned. He didn’t understand what he was right about.

“She hasn’t even begun searching for healers to help you,” Rey answered his unspoken question.

“It would be career suicide if anyone was to find out about how she helped me after she reforms the Senate.” He didn’t like the chancellor, but he did understand her hesitation. It was one of the reasons he hadn’t told her any information that he had learned from his spy droids.
He didn’t trust her not to sell him out.

Rey narrowed her eyes at him.

Vader was intrigued. He allowed himself a small smirk. “Did you argue with her after we last spoke?”

He watched as her cheeks coloured. She gave him a small nod of her head.

Now he fully grinned. She was persistent. Stubborn. He liked that about her. Her lack of fear at calling people out on their banthashit. Her lack of fear for arguing for what she believed to be right.

It was admirable.

“Breha is now looking to help you,” Rey interrupted his thoughts.

What?

“What?” He voiced with surprise. He must have heard her wrong.

Rey rubbed her arms. “Breha Organa.” At Vader’s nod she continued. “She said it was the Alderaanian way to help those who needed it. She is attempting to get in touch with some specialists that she knows. People she trusts. Healers. Medical people.” A pause. “She wants to meet up with you to get the specifics on what exactly you need.”

“She does?” He hadn’t been able to save Alderaan. He didn’t understand why she’d want to help him — Alderaanian or not.

Rey nodded shyly. Self-consciously. “I’d like to meet up with you as well.” She tugged at her braid. “My rat tail needs to be rebraided.” She gave him a small smile.

“Alright.” He agreed with his Padawan. “It will likely have to take place after your Rebels complete their mission. There is no way Mothma will let you take a vessel to see me right now.”
Rey nodded in understanding.

“How has your training been going?” He was curious. He always enjoyed hearing about her new experiences with the Force. “Still meditating?”

Rey nodded once more. “I meditate with Ahsoka usually in the mornings when Obi-Wan is in the daily meetings. With Obi-Wan at night before bed.” She shrugged. “It’s going alright. I still hold their hands to make certain I don’t go too far.”

Vader nodded. “Good. When Palpatine is dead and gone I’ll meditate with you without hanging onto your hands. I’ll let you explore as far as you want to.” He paused at her surprise. “How does that sound?”

“I look forward to it.” Quiet. A small grin on her face. “You’re serious about defeating the Emperor?” She frowned. “And living afterwards, I mean.”

“I am.” It felt good to voice out loud. “I don’t want to die. Not anymore.”

“Because of your children,” Rey said. Her understanding was humming hard around his quarters.

Vader grinned. “And you. Mostly because of you.” He hesitated for a moment. His smile disappearing. “I don’t — I don’t really know my children all that well. Not like I know you.” He frowned. “I’d like to know them better, but I also know that I’ve made a lot of really bad decisions. That those decisions cost them their mother’s life… among other things.”

Rey wiped at her cheek. She cleared her throat. “They both gave Mothma a piece of their minds as well. Leia really chewed her out. Luke stated that if he had a vote in her supposed democracy, he’d vote her out.”

Vader grinned. He felt proud. Proud of Luke and Leia for using their heads. “What else are you doing with your training?”

Rey frowned. “I practice my lightsaber training with either Ahsoka or Luke. It’s getting better, I think. My lightsaber skills, I mean. Obi-Wan talks to me about different stuff. The history of the
Force. The things that Yoda touched on when we spent time with him.” She paused. Vader could feel her hesitation.

“What is it?”

“When we first arrived here, Obi-Wan said that you figured it was important that I learn about what the dark side felt like.” Rey paused a moment, searching for the right words. “He said that I needed to become familiar with it. The obviousness of it most of the time, but also how it can sometimes be subtle as well. Sneaky. Manipulative.”

Vader nodded slowly. “To protect you from Sidious because he’s a manipulative bastard who now knows about you.”

Rey nodded. “When we were with Yoda… when I went into that cave by mistake… I didn’t feel a thing until I stepped inside.” She peered at Vader closely. “Why didn’t I feel anything until it was too late?”

Vader frowned. His mind blank. “Perhaps you weren’t paying attention to where you were going?”

Rey shook her head. “No. I most definitely was. There was a clearing just before the cave. I stopped there for a bit to look at the sky. The cave was the only way through the clearing, I thought.” She rubbed her arms. “Obi-Wan took me and Luke there the next day to show Luke where not to go, and there were plenty of ways to step back into the jungle.” She swallowed. “It was like it called to me when I was alone. Made me focus just on the cave entrance. I couldn’t see anything else.” She quirked her head at Vader. “Why did it call to me? Why couldn’t I feel it was a dark side cave before?”

“Perhaps you just couldn’t tell it was dark,” Vader tried to assure her. “You’ve only been training in the Force for months, Rey. Not quite a year, since you appeared on my ship.” He shook his head at her. “Jedi who have trained for decades have been known to miss certain signs of the dark side. I wouldn’t worry too much about it.”

Rey nodded slowly, her frown still evident on her face. “It felt normal to me.” A quiet confession.

Vader’s breath caught at her confession, his respirator forcing him to continue breathing. He was almost certain it had something to do with the research base on Jakku. Genetic engineering to create the perfect soldier — *apprentice* — in the dark side of the Force.
He swallowed, aware of Rey watching him. “Perhaps you’ve spent too much time around me?” He suggested. “Maybe I made it feel normal to you.” He shook his head once more. “Please don’t worry about it. Once you’ve been training for longer, you’ll be able to pick up on it better. You are exceptionally strong in the Force, Rey. You’ll be able to pick up on things that other Jedi have had difficulty with. I promise.”

His Padawan nodded slowly. “Alright,” she conceded.

A moment of comfortable silence as the two of them took each other in.

“Was there anything else you wanted to talk about?” Vader broke the silence. “You’re doing alright, I hope?”

Rey hummed quietly. A small grin on her face. “I’m doing well. The cave was the only thing I wanted to get your opinion on, I think.”

Vader nodded in response. “How is your vessel maintenance coming along? Need any pointers?”

Rey grinned, her eyes squinting in amusement. “It’s going well. A handful T-47s have been modified like you suggested. I’m not sure where for exactly, but… they are ready to go.” She scratched her arm. “Right now I get to do basic maintenance on the fighters. Make certain everything is running smoothly.” She shrugged. “It’s fun. Relaxing.”

A grin broke out on Vader’s face. “Well… if you ever need any help, just let me know.”

Rey nodded before fading away. Their bond had closed.

His comm blinked an alert. Someone on the bridge wished to speak with him.

Vader allowed the call to go through.

Montferrat appeared on the comm. “Lord Vader, sir. We are about to arrive at Geonosis.”
Vader gave him a curt nod of his head. “I will meet you on the bridge.” He waved the communications device off and stood up from his seat.

It was time to do some sleuthing.

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“Have you seen Rey?” Obi-Wan asked Jan after doing a quick search for her around the hangar.

Jan wiped his dirty hands off on a rag before tossing it onto the workbench. “Yep… she is in her TIE that she likes to hide in.” He turned to look at Obi-Wan directly. “She was tinkering away for hours in here. Told her she needed to take some time off for herself. Don’t want her burning out.”

Obi-Wan frowned. “Alright. I’ll go have a chat with her.” He turned to make his way towards the TIE tucked in the back of the hangar. “Thank you, by the way.”


Obi-Wan grinned slightly as he left the lead mechanic to his repairs. He walked towards the TIE, now seeing Rey curled up on the seat, yawning.

He gestured to her that he’d come in to speak with her, and made his way up the portable steps to reach the wing support and popped open the hatch before dropping into the vessel behind Rey. He closed the hatch behind him, making certain no one would be able to listen in on their conversation.

“How’re you doing?” He asked her quietly as he made his way over in the cramped vessel. He leaned back against the console, and crossed his arms. “Jan mentioned you’ve been working on the fighters for hours. Couldn’t sleep?”

Rey shook her head, looking up at him from her spot on the only seat. “Had a lot on my mind.” She shrugged. “I just finished speaking with Anakin about what was keeping me up. I feel a bit better now.”
“Alright,” he replied quietly. He didn’t want to force her to tell him what it was that was keeping her up, but was thankful Anakin was there for her to voice her concerns. Like a true Master should be for their Padawan. “If you need anyone else to speak to, I’m all ears.” He looked at her pointedly. “Don’t forget that, alright?”

Rey nodded in understanding. “Master Anakin mentioned mission planning,” she prompted him.

“Yes. Tureen VII has found themselves under an Imperial blockade because of their aid to the Rebellion,” Obi-Wan began. “Bail, Han, and Chewbacca were barely able to get out in time. The plan is to steal a Star Destroyer and use it to help overpower the vessels present above Tureen if we can. From there we should be able to take out the blockade.” He paused, thinking the ridiculous plan through. “We’ve selected a vessel already and will soon be sending a team to take control of it.”

Rey hummed, narrowing her eyes. “The *Harbinger*?” She asked.

Obi-Wan raised a single brow. “Your General told you about this mission?”

Rey frowned, shaking her head. “Not the mission, no. Nothing specific at least. I just remember the name *Harbinger*. My General mentioned it… something about stealing it. I didn’t even know it was an Imperial ship.” She shook her head once more. “I don’t remember if she said anything more than that. Nothing that jumps out at me, at least.”

“Good to know we picked the same vessel as the one in your time,” Obi-Wan informed her quietly, a small grin on his face.

Rey hummed in agreement. “How are you going to steal it though?” She frowned. “Especially with the few thousand that’ll be on the Destroyer.”

“We’ll shoot out the reactor, causing it to overheat and eventually blow.” He crossed his arms across his chest. “Standard protocol is to abandon ship when the reactor is damaged. We will slip in and jettison the reactor out. Tow the Destroyer closer to Tureen VII, then unhook the *Falcon* from the *Harbinger* and take out the blockade.”

“Because without the reactor, you have no hyperspace abilities any longer,” Rey chimed in quietly. “You’ll still have the basic travel capabilities though, so you can come into the blockade and take
everyone by surprise.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “That’s the plan at least.” He sighed. “Hopefully the *Falcon* won’t be noticed during that ordeal. It’s a bit complex — the timing of everything. Han waved off everyone’s concern once he was convinced of the mission.”

Rey smirked. “That’s ‘cause the *Falcon* has cloaking abilities. It’s how he got so close to Luke above the Death Star without anyone noticing until it was too late.”

“Cloaking is usually limited to larger vessels,” Obi-Wan snorted in amusement. “Destroyer sized vessels.”

Rey shrugged, a grin still evident on her face. “Welcome to the world of smuggling.”

Obi-Wan failed to hold back his snort of amusement. “Indeed.”

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Vader remained kneeling on the floor of Sidious’ throne room as the Emperor ridiculed Tagge and Tenkalla for their failure to capture the rebels who had taken part in the battle above Tureen VII.

“My Lord, sir,” Tenkalla whimpered from his knees on the hard stone floor. “Proper protocol says to abandon ship if the reactor is in any way damaged. I was only following protocol.”

“You left behind perfectly functioning fighters in your cowardly escape,” Palpatine countered snidely. His fingers curling ever-so-slightly to begin cutting off the commanders air supply. “The rebel scum now have those ships. Those terrorists have been aided by you. You. Are. A. Traitor.”

His fingers closed tighter. Tenkalla was choking loudly next to Vader. His hands grasping at his throat. Body twitching in protest from the lack of oxygen.

“Your punishment shall be *death!*”
Tenkalla’s neck snapped and he collapsed to the floor. Dead.

“And you,” the Emperor turned his attention to Tagge who was sweating profusely under his collar. “It was your responsibility to lead the blockade above Tureen! Why were you not present?”

Tagge swallowed, looking down at the floor. “My Lord,” he began quietly. He cleared his throat before continuing with a stronger, more confident, voice. “I allocated the blockade responsibilities to the Avenger. The Executor remained leading the search for the Rebel Base. Our probe droids picked up life signs on a planet named Sorgan, which was previously believed to be uninhabited.” He swallowed once more. “Once the Executor arrived there, it was apparent that the life forms present were not Rebels at all, but individuals who merely wished to lead a quiet life.” He paused, hesitant. “There wasn’t even a spaceport present, my Lord. No advanced technology of any kind. No industry. The individuals we found were just krill farmers, nothing more than that. Upon realizing my error, I ordered the Executor to travel to Tureen VII as quickly as possible. We, however, arrived too late to aid in the battle — the Rebels had already fled after severely damaging or completely destroying the majority of the fleet above the planet.”

Silence.

Vader blinked as he waited for Sidious to dole out his punishment to Tagge, wondering just what it could be.

“A foolish mistake,” the Emperor chided quietly. Eerily.

Tagge swallowed, nodding curtly. “It was, my Lord.”

“Perhaps commanding the Death Squadron is too great a responsibility for you.” Sidious rested his elbows on the armrests of his throne. His hands steepled in front of his mouth.

“My Lord?” Tagge’s fear was humming strongly throughout the room.

Vader blinked, wondering what Sidious was playing at.

“Yes,” Palpatine answered his own unspoken question. “I believe it is too much for someone like yourself. Far too much for someone so… inexperienced.” His sick smirk coated the room with darkness.
Vader held back his shiver.

“Lord Vader will take over the Executor, I think.” Sidious turned slightly to now look at Vader still kneeling, silent save for his breathing apparatus. “You, Commander Tagge, will take over Commander Tenkalla’s crew.” He smiled widely at the two men kneeling before him in subordination. “You’ll get a new vessel, so it shouldn’t be a complete upset.” A pause. “Lord Vader can teach you how to command appropriately. He will take control of the Death Squadron and you will answer to him.”

Silence.

“Understood?”

“Yes my Lord.” Quiet. Barely above a whisper.

Vader could feel Tagge’s hate for him pulsing strongly. His humiliation.

“No you agree Lord Vader?” Sidious snapped coolly at him.

Vader nodded. “Yes, my Master.” A pause. “I must make some changes to the Dreadnought before I am to take command of the squadron.”


Vader nodded once more before rising to his feet. Tagge doing the same.

He turned and left the room, his cape billowing behind him. Tagge struggling to keep up with Vader’s long strides.

“Slow down you fool.”
Vader quirked his head and began Force choking the man. Force pushing him up against a wall in the old Jedi Temple. Tagge’s feet dangling off of the floor as he continued to choke the commander. Letting his hate for the man seep all the way to his bones. “That is no way to speak to your superior, Cassio. You must learn some manners. I suggest you re-educate yourself before reporting to me aboard the Executor in two weeks time.”

He released his hold on the Commander, letting him drop unceremoniously to the floor.

He continued his trek out of the building and onto the landing platform where his Lambda shuttle was waiting.

He needed to speak with Montferrat. He needed to tell him of the Emperor’s plans.

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“He’s taking you away from your trusted soldiers and placing you with Imperial loyalists. He is preventing you from staging a coup with your loyal soldiers,” Montferrat muttered quietly after Vader told him the news.

“Yes. I am well aware of the Emperor’s plans.” Vader continued looking out the viewport of the Devastator. “He is keeping an eye on me because he doesn’t trust me. Tagge is now under my command.”

Jhared snorted quietly. “And he’ll sell you out the second he finds something even remotely questionable.”

“Indeed.”

The commander crossed his arms, and frowned. “Does that mean the Devastator will now be a part of the Death Squadron?” He rubbed his chin in thought as he turned to look at Vader closely. “That isn’t necessarily a bad thing.”

“We could use the change to our advantage,” Vader agreed. “You’ll make an exceptional lead commander of this starship.”
A small grin broke out on Montferrat’s face. “Thank you, Lord Vader.” He sighed. “How much time do you have until you take the Executor over?”

“Two weeks. Adjustments need to be made.” Vader paused a moment, thinking about his upcoming meeting with Breha Organa and Rey. He would need to meet them before he changed crews. “I need to meet with someone before then. It is vital that it happens as soon as possible.”

“Of course,” the commander waved him off. “I can man the bridge for now while you set up a time.”

Vader gave him a curt nod and left the bridge, making his way to his quarters.

He needed to move fast if he was to visit with Rey once again. He couldn’t risk anyone from the Executor finding out about her at all.

He didn’t trust a soul on that ship.
Rey allowed herself a small grin as she stood with Ahsoka and Breha just outside the Ghtroc 720 on the salt flats of Crait, watching Anakin’s TIE Advanced carefully come in to land some twenty feet from them.

The salt was blowing hard around them as the engine to the fighter was shut down. A moment or two of silence before the hatch popped open, allowing Anakin to climb out of the vessel and drop down hard on the ground below.

Rey watched as he made his way over to them, before stopping directly in front of Breha.

“Queen Organa,” Anakin began, “my deepest condolences for the destruction of Alderaan.” He paused, quirked his head slightly. “My condolences for the mass murder of your people,” he corrected, giving Breha a slight bow of his head, showing his respect.

Breha curtsied slightly, her head bowed in respect. “Your condolences are noted, General Skywalker, and thanks are given.”

Rey could feel her Master’s surprise at Breha’s choice of words.

“I do hope you forgive my refusal to use your Sith name,” Breha informed Anakin pleasantly, looking directly into the eyepieces of his mask. “Especially one coined by Emperor Palpatine. I refuse to respect anything that man creates.”

Rey waited with bated breath for Anakin’s response, before she felt his amusement hum strongly around the group.

“Understood, Queen Organa.” He gestured to her with one of his hands. “I share your reservations in regard to the Emperor.”

He turned to look at Ahsoka standing next to Rey. “Ahsoka,” he greeted the togruta with a subtle nod of his head. “Your injuries from Vrogas Vas are healed I assume?”
Rey held back a smirk as Ahsoka rolled her eyes at her former Master.

“It was only a bump on the head,” she waved off his concern. “Plus some superficial wounds. I’m fine.”

Anakin nodded once more in understanding before turning his complete attention onto Rey.

She gave him a small smile, hesitating slightly as she remembered her confession to him in her refresher only a few weeks prior. Seeing him in person was making her nervous. Uneasy.

_Exposed._

“Master Anakin,” she greeted him quietly.

He quirked his head at her. “Rey,” he responded in kind. A moment of hesitation before he pulled her in for a hug.

Rey closed her eyes in relief as she wrapped her arms around his torso, pressing her cheek against his shoulder guard. Her nervousness was slowly ebbing away; calmness replacing her unease.

She pulled back after a moment, looking up at the mask of Anakin. “You mentioned in your message that a lot has happened over the last few days,” she prompted him.

He nodded, dropping his hands from her shoulders. “It has. It’s best if we speak inside; there is plenty we need to go through in a short amount of time.”

“Then we best get to it,” Breha chimed in. She made her way back into the vessel.

Rey followed close behind, with Anakin directly behind her and Ahsoka bringing up the rear.

The group settled into their seats — Rey and Anakin once again sharing the bench seat; Ahsoka was on the chair facing the ramp.
Breha was facing Anakin, sitting with her hands clasped together. “Where would you like to begin, General Skywalker?”

Rey watched as Anakin quirked his head slightly. She took his hand in her own to try to show her support.

He gave her hand a gentle squeeze. “Anakin is fine, if you would prefer. I don’t need the titles.” At Breha’s understanding nod he continued. “Some changes have been made to the Imperial Navy: Tagge will no longer be commander of the Executor due to his failure above Tureen VII. He relegated his duties to the Avenger and continued on with his search for your base. As a result of that he will no longer be leading the Death Squadron — at least not officially. That task now falls to me.”

“That puts you in a difficult position,” Breha stated quietly.

“It does,” Anakin agreed. “I do not know what the Death Squadron is currently doing, other than searching for your Rebel Base. I do not know where they’ve already searched and moved on from, or where they plan to search in the future.” A pause. “I expect that I will learn shortly of these things.”

“But you cannot tell us much, because then Palpatine would know that you are feeding us information.” Breha sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose.

“Indeed.”

“What happens to the Devastator?” Ahsoka asked quietly.

“Commander Montferrat will take complete control of the Destroyer. The Devastator will also become part of the Death Squadron. They will know of what is going on.” Anakin squeezed Rey’s hand. “I expect that I will also assign them probe droids — it would be foolish for my soldiers to not have them.”

“That may work in our favour though,” Breha said, deep in thought as she narrowed her eyes.
“Because of Montferrat and his treasonous behaviour over the last decade?” Anakin asked the politician, amusement wafting around the vessel. “Although, I suppose I am one to talk.”

Breha nodded slowly, a wry grin on her face “I don’t expect him to tell us much of anything — it would be incredibly stupid of him to do so — but even if it is just occasionally, it would be better than nothing.”

Rey quirked her head, she could feel Anakin’s mind whirring. She gave his hand another squeeze.

He nodded slowly. “Perhaps.”

“The changes in the Imperial Navy are something we will deal with,” Breha waved off Anakin’s concern. “One of the good things that I’ve noticed with the Rebellion is that we are able to adjust relatively quickly. We will make due with what we have.”

“Palpatine is isolating you from your trusted soldiers and officers,” Ahsoka muttered. A frown on her face as she took in Anakin sitting before her.

“I’ve come to the same conclusion,” Anakin confirmed. “I believe it is to prevent me from carrying out a successful coup. He is a firm believer in the Rule of Two.”

Ahsoka closed her eyes in understanding. “Of course.”

Rey frowned, noting the need to ask either Ahsoka or Anakin what they weren’t saying. She hadn’t thought of the personnel change as something to be concerned about. It wasn’t any different to what happened in her time, from what she had learn from her General.

Silence as the group digested the information.

“I’ve gotten in touch with a healer recently who specializes in traumatic injuries,” Breha told Anakin kindly. “They would like to know the specifics of your injuries in order to begin to prepare for treatment. Would that be something you are alright with talking about?”

Anakin looked down at his lap, his hand holding Rey’s tightly. “Yes, I can speak about it.” He
looked over at Rey for a moment before turning his attention back to Breha. His thumb began rubbing the back of Rey’s hand. “In terms of the major things: I have a pacemaker to control my heartbeat, for an arrhythmia that it attempts to control. I believe I need surgery to heal the damage, but it has never been done.” He paused, thinking about what to talk about next. “I have my breathing apparatus to make sure I get enough oxygen. My lungs are damaged from the ash on Mustafar, which has affected my ability to absorb oxygen. It also acts as a way to filter out harmful pollutants that may damage my lungs even further.”

Breha nodded slowly. “Rey mentioned that your bacta is of poor quality.”

A nod. “Yes. Sidious says it is the highest quality available, but I am aware that it is the quality that one can find on some Outer Rim world.”

“Because he’s a slimy bastard,” Ahsoka chimed in. Her anger wafting hard around the seating area.

“That’s true,” Rey muttered quietly. She squeezed Anakin’s hand once again.

“My limbs are of poor quality as well,” Anakin continued.

“All of them?” Breha asked him with interest. “Or is your right arm a better quality?”

Hesitation. “My right arm is better quality than my left arm and both legs, but the design hasn’t been updated for the last two decades.” He paused. “The material used is of poor quality on my other limbs. The edges are sharp and appear to be unfinished. My legs are obviously the wrong size for me and the ankles are angled strangely.” He looked to Rey. “Makes for easier kneeling though, which is something Sidious likely took into account.”

“Because he’s a sadistic monster who enjoys having people kneel before him,” Breha huffed in annoyance. She pinched the bridge of her nose, shaking her head at herself. “I apologize for my outburst. It is not the way someone in my position should speak.”

Ahsoka placed a hand on Breha’s shoulder. “It’s alright. Everyone here agrees with your assessment.” She smirked. “You should hear Obi-Wan when he gets going… I never knew he had it in him. I really didn’t.” She narrowed her eyes at both Rey and Anakin. “Was there other medical things that Breha needed to know before she informs her contact what is needed?”
Rey watched as Anakin shook his head slowly. “I don’t believe so. Most of my injuries can be healed with good bacta. At least mostly healed.”

“But what about your eyes?” Rey asked him quietly. “You blink a lot when your mask is off. Aren’t your eyes damaged?”

Anakin shook his head, squeezing Rey’s hand once again. “My corneas were damaged from Mustafar, but I’ve already had them replaced. I can see just fine.” He rubbed the back of her hand with his thumb. “I’m just not used to the bright lights. My eyepieces filter everything out. The white light that you are used to, I no longer am. Everything is tinged red for me.”

“Well,” Breha began with a knowing look in her eyes. “I will inform my contact to obtain good bacta, cybernetic limbs for an individual who is... approximately six feet tall?”

“About that, yes,” Anakin agreed. “One or two inches taller, if I remember correctly.”

Breha acknowledged the correction. “We will need a heart specialist present, which I believe I can find. The healer I am currently in contact with is a lung specialist. He helped save my life when I was a young girl. Replaced my lungs with pulmonodes after a Day of Demand mishap.” She smiled at Rey’s surprise. “He was off planet when the Death Star fired upon my people. On vacation with his family.” She swallowed. “Unfortunately, my heart specialist was not. Therefore, finding someone we can trust in that field may take me a bit more time. But it will be done.”

Rey nodded in understanding.

“I will also ask my contact to obtain some synthetic skin,” Breha informed Anakin kindly. “In case there are wounds on your flesh that cannot be healed with bacta. Rey mentioned two open wounds on your head and face.”

Anakin quirked his head at Rey, his surprise humming strongly through their bond. He squeezed her hand. “That is correct. On my scalp from the back of my head all the way to the front, and then on my cheek all the way to my ear. Those wounds haven’t healed much.” A pause. “I think the wounds were mostly caused by the medical droids operating on me. They took bits of my skin on my head and face to patch up other areas. I remember parts of the procedure.”

“You were awake when you were operated on?” Rey asked him quietly. She couldn’t dampen her shock.
Anakin nodded. “For part of it, at least. I may have lost consciousness once or twice.”

“But you were given an anesthetic.”

Anakin shook his head. “No. I don’t think so. I felt everything. I felt the medical droids screwing in the casings to my legs to allow for the attachment and removal of my cybernetics. I felt my left arm get cut back a bit to clean up the wound before a casing was added to allow for the attachment and removal of the cybernetic arm. I felt them adjust my right cybernetic arm. It had been burnt quite badly and they needed to clean it up.” He shrugged. “I didn’t feel the pacemaker getting inserted into my chest — I assume I was unconscious for that.”

Rey looked towards Breha and Ahsoka. Both women were shocked.


Anakin looked down to the floor of the vessel. “The dark side. I used the dark side, Ahsoka.” He looked at the togruta once more, shrugging. “I had — have — a lot of hate. A lot of pain and anger. The darkness fed off of that and kept me alive.” A pause. “You know how the dark side works. You know how it festers and grows.”

“I’m sorry,” Ahsoka murmured with tears in her eyes. “I’m sorry I wasn’t there. That I abandoned you. Everyone. I should’ve been by your side making sure your were alright.”

Anakin shook his head. “No. I would’ve killed you.” He squeezed Rey’s hand once more, searching desperately for comfort. Rey squeezed back, assuring him she was with him. “I tried to kill you on Malachor. I wanted to; I wanted to snuff you right out. I wanted to make you hurt like I did.” A pause. “You being away from me when I fully chose the dark side saved your life.”

Rey gave Ahsoka a small smile as the togruta wiped at a stray tear.

“My Padawan has helped me realize that,” Anakin stated with conviction.

Rey’s breath caught in her throat as she looked into the mask of her Master. “I have?”
Anakin nodded. “Yes.”

She could feel that he wanted to say more, but was well-aware of their audience. Hesitant to say anything else in front of them.

Rey gave him a small grin and a little nod of her head, telling him without words that she understood. That they’d speak about it later if he wanted to.

Breha cleared her throat. “Was there anything else we needed to discuss?”

Rey turned her attention back to the other occupants, ignoring Ahsoka’s smirk.

“I have droids in the Imperial Center telling me information daily. I know that the second Death Star has begun construction somewhere, but I cannot figure out where.” He shook his head. “Not Endor. Not Geonosis.” A pause. “Perhaps the Rebellion can begin searching,” he suggested. “I know I will no longer be able to with the Executor — I trust no one on that ship.”

“We already are in a way.” Breha informed him. “While Vrogas Vas may have decimated our fleet, we did get information from Admiral Piett out of it.” At Anakin’s intrigue she elaborated. “He traded the flight plans of the entire Imperial fleet for the location of our refueling base. Unfortunately, the plans are from a decade ago, but they are still full of information.” She gave Anakin a wry grin. “Bureaucracies have a difficult time making any significant changes over a relatively short amount of time. In the few queries that we have completed, we’ve come to realize that not much has changed over the last ten years.”

“Can you isolate well traveled paths outside of the Core and Mid-Rim planets? Focus on flight plans that are in the Outer Regions of the galaxy.”

Rey could feel Anakin’s mind whirring. “You think we can pinpoint the locations of the construction of the first Death Star based on paths of Destroyers… and use that information to find the second?” She wasn’t certain she was following along.

Anakin shook his head slowly, shrugging. “I already know where the first Death Star was constructed — Geonosis and Scarif. I also just recently went to Endor and it wasn’t there either. I was thinking more along the lines of tying the obvious resource locales with previous construction locations to pinpoint where number two is.”
“Because it’s likely the resources are being taken from similar — if not the exact same — locations,” Breha muttered excitedly. “Like Shu-Torun. If we can determine that that world was used to construct the first Death Star from our data, we may be able to figure out where they are getting the other resources. From there we might be able to figure out where the second weapon is currently being constructed. I don’t believe it would be too far from a construction sight right now, considering it has likely only begun being built.” Anakin nodded his agreement. “That is definitely something I can get Mothma to get our slicers to focus on.”

“Or we can liberate the worlds who are providing resources,” Ahsoka suggested. “Assuming they are supplying resources against their will.”

“They will be under extreme security, those worlds,” Anakin informed everyone. “Liberation would likely result in the deaths of the majority of the planet’s citizens.”

Ahsoka slumped slightly in her seat. “That’s true. The rebellion would be labelled as a terrorist organization… at least by more people than it is already.”

“Indeed.”

Silence for a few moments as the occupants of the vessel went over everything that was discussed.

“Is that all?” Rey asked Anakin, breaking the silence.

He gave her a nod of his head. “I think that’s it. I just have to rebraid your rat tail.” His amusement hummed around the room as he flicked at her braid.

Rey grinned in response as she hopped up from her seat. Anakin following after her.

She turned to face Ahsoka who was also beginning to stand up.

The sound of gloves being pulled off and tossed onto the bench seat.
A cool finger brushed against her right ear.

Rey blinked her eyes closed, exhaling slowly.

Her hair was being pulled as Anakin began to separate the thin Padawan braid from the rest. Pulling the majority of her hair off to the opposite side of her head.

“Hold this part.”

Rey grasped her sectioned hair with her left hand, keeping it out of the way for her Master to braid.

Her braid began to be undone; tugging and pulling as Anakin carefully pulled it apart to redo.

Rey exhaled slowly once he finished unbraiding her hair.

A second or two of nothing before Anakin began rebraiding her Padawan braid carefully.

“There is no emotion, there is peace,” Rey began quietly. Her eyes remained closed as she recited the ancient code of the Jedi Order. “There is no ignorance, there is knowledge. There is no passion, there is serenity. There is no chaos, there is harmony.” She took a breath before she completed the words of the Jedi. “There is no death, there is the Force.”

Anakin finished tying off her braid before giving it a sharp tug, pulling her into his chest. “Perfect, my young Padawan.” Pride hummed strongly through their bond, along with admiration and care.

Rey burst out laughing at his teasing. Beaming as she reopened her eyes, spotting Ahsoka grinning widely at the pair of them.

Turning around, she faced Anakin as he began tugging his gloves back on. Suddenly sad to see him leave.

Worried at what he would face once he took control of the Executor.
Her smile melted off of her face at the thought.

Anakin finished with his gloves and shook his head at Rey. “I’ll be fine. I promise.” He cupped her cheek. “Everyone on that Dreadnought is terrified of me. They’re scared of that *mystical* thing called the Force.” His amusement hummed around the vessel. “I’ll give them a show if I feel they need it.”

“We’ll be in touch,” Ahsoka piped up.

Rey nodded her agreement. “In a few days?”

“Likely,” Anakin confirmed. “We can talk more then, if need be.” He focused on Breha watching the proceedings with a small grin on her face. “Thank you.” He acknowledged her kindly. “For everything.”

Breha gave him a small nod of her head. “It is the Alderaanian way.”

Rey blinked sadly as Anakin squeezed her shoulder before turning around and making his way down the ramp of the vessel. His footsteps heavy as he strolled out of the ship towards his TIE Advanced.

Ahsoka gently touched Rey’s shoulder as she hit the button to close the ramp.

They needed to leave. Needed to get back to the Rebellion.

“It will be fine, Rey.” A squeeze of her shoulder. “He’s been looking after himself for decades. He can handle anyone on that ship.”

Rey nodded, trying desperately to remain positive. Hopeful.

“Come dear,” Breha reached for Rey’s hand. “We must leave now.” She gently tugged Rey towards the cockpit of the Ghtroc 720.
The women quietly and wordlessly making their way through the preflight checks prior to lift off.

“Alright,” Ahsoka said to the cockpit as Anakin’s TIE pulled up quickly in front of them, higher and higher into the atmosphere. “Everything checks out good. Time to get the show on the road.”

She flicked a couple of switches on the console, firing up the double engines to flight mode and grasped the yoke before following the TIE off of the salt planet.

The Ghtroc 720 travelled for twenty minutes before they reached the hyperspace lane. The first of four they’d need to take to safely return to the base.

Rey punched in the hyperspace coordinates and waited for the vessel to calculate the route.

It took the vessel a minute or two to accurately determine the route before they flashed off. Making their way home.

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“You know… Bail and I have quite a large age gap,” Breha informed Rey as they all sat around the seating area of the Ghtroc. Taking a much needed break from the cockpit.

Rey frowned, her eyebrows scrunching up in confusion. “Okay… I’m not sure why you felt the need to tell me that. But… that’s nice to hear, I guess.”

Ahsoka scratched her chin, amusement etched on her face.

Breha smiled at Rey kindly. “I see that both you and Anakin understand each other extremely well. It is very easy to see that the two of you care deeply about one another.” She gave Rey an understanding smile. “In regard to my husband and I, I had just turned twenty when I first got to know Bail. He was already in his late thirties. Almost forty. Although most would deny it if they were to be asked, many of my colleagues and supporters thought the gap to be far too large for our relationship to last.” She sighed. “We’ve been happily married for almost twenty eight years. It hasn’t been without its trials and tribulations — I’m not going to deny that — but those trials had nothing to do with our age difference.” She shook her head.
Rey swallowed, her throat tight. Understanding what Breha wasn’t saying. She cleared her throat. “Anakin and I are not in a relationship other than our Master and Padawan one. While we are close, given both of our upbringings and our treatment from the Republic, there is nothing more to it than that.”

“Rey —”

“There is nothing going on between us,” Rey interrupted, reiterating what she just said. “There will not be anything going on between us for some time. If at all.” She shook her head at the two women facing her. “The galaxy is a dangerous place. The Emperor is a dangerous man. If he were to find out how close myself and Master Anakin are currently as only Master and Padawan, he would use that to hurt Anakin even more.” She swallowed. “I cannot take that risk. Neither of us can. That is something we both understand and accept.” A pause. “I’d appreciate it if you could refrain from the gossiping of our relationship. It’s how this mess started to begin with. Secrets.” She shook her head once again. “I don’t want anyone to get any ideas.”

Sad eyes peered back at her. Breha nodded. “I understand dear. I do.” She gave her a sad smile. “Whatever happens — whenever it happens — I just want you to know that you have my support.” A pause. “There is far too much hate in this galaxy; the best way to get rid of that hate is through love. Please don’t ever forget that.”

“Well… I always found a good swipe of a lightsaber or two works wonders in defeating hate as well,” Ahsoka chimed in dryly. “I’m certainly not going to be showing Palpatine some love.”

Rey grimaced, shuddering in disgust. “Who in their right mind would love him?” She swallowed. “That makes me wanna hurl just thinking about it. It’s foul.”

“Palpatine is the exception to the rule,” Breha replied with laughter in her voice. “He’s always the exception.”

The vessel alerted them that it was about to leave hyperspace for the last time. Bringing the conversation to a sudden halt as everyone made their way back to their stations.

Rey plopped down in the co-pilot’s chair next to Ahsoka, and began buckling up her harness.

She held her breath as Ahsoka grasped onto the controls.
The Ghtroc 720 dropped roughly out of hyperspace, just before the asteroid belt.

Rey’s eyes widened in shock at what she saw before them.

D’Qar was surrounded by Star Destroyers. A half dozen at least.

“Fuck!” Ahsoka yelled out as she pulled the vessel into a sharp turn. Trying desperately to both avoid the Imperial Navy’s notice and the asteroids flying past the vessel.

Rey swore under her breath. “We’ve been found out. I’m entering new hyperspace coordinates now!”

“Breha! Get ready on the guns!” Ahsoka ordered. “I don’t think they’ve spotted us yet, but they will before long.”

“I’m on it. I’m ready.” Breha was holding on tightly to the triggers. Waiting for the call out to fire on the threat if need be.

“Try to keep us in a straight line,” Rey reminded the togruta as she tried to manually enter in the agreed upon coordinates. “We will enter into hyperspace quicker.”

“I know, I know. I’m sorry!” Ahsoka whined. “We need to get out of the asteroid belt. It’ll rip us to shreds if we enter into hyperspace right now.”

An asteroid exploded directly in front of them.

“We’ve been noticed!” Rey yelled out, making certain their shields were up and at full power. “Breha, shoot when needed.”

“Understood!” The queen of Alderaan yelled out as she focused on the screen in front of her.
“Kriffing hell!” Ahsoka called out as she dodged yet another bout of fire from the enemy forces. They exited the asteroid field, swerving and dipping as they continued to be chased. “Are the coordinates entered?”

Rey finished entering in the data. “Yep. Tell me when to hit the button to begin the calculations.”

Breha began firing on the handful of TIE Fighters chasing them. “Oh! I got one. Only a few more to go now.”

“I’ll keep us as stable as possible,” Ahsoka called out. “Rey, hit the button. Let’s get out of here.”

Rey nodded, slapping the hyperspace calculation button hard. The system began its calculation of the coordinates.

Blinking lights. Humming consoles.

A moment of absolute silence, broken by a loud alert indicating the calculations were complete.

Rey closed her eyes in relief. Exhaling slowly.

The Ghtroc 720 flashed off into hyperspace.

They had gotten away.

Eerie silence.

Rey turned around in her seat to face both Breha and Ahsoka. Stars streaking past as they traveled through hyperspace.

Her adrenaline was slowly beginning to wane. Her heart beat was slowing to a more manageable rate.
“Do we have any idea where they are?” She asked, breaking the silence. “Was there an agreed upon location for the new base?”

Breha nodded, sighing. “It hasn’t been specified, but we’ve narrowed it down to two locations: Hoth or Ajan Kloss. Both are able to house everyone there, I believe.”

Rey rubbed her temple. “And Mothma got me and Jan to customize the handful of T-47s. Specifically for a humid location with lots of land and water.” She frowned. “Hoth wouldn’t fit that… but Ajan Kloss might. I’m not familiar with it. Is it a jungle planet with a bunch of swamps?”

Breha nodded. “It is. It’s similar to D’Qar.”

“Where are you thinking?” Ahsoka asked quietly. Her elbows on her knees as she leaned forward in her seat with anticipation.

Breha frowned. “Mon keeps bringing up Hoth… but it isn’t logical right now. Not with the T-47s undergoing their customizations.”

“So… Ajan Kloss?”

Breha nodded slowly, frowning. “That would be my bet. If I’m wrong we can check out Hoth afterwards.”

Rey nodded her agreement.

“First things first though,” Ahsoka began. “We need to find somewhere to make certain we haven’t been hit with a tracking beacon.”

“I never thought of that,” Rey grimaced at the implications.

“Yep. I found that one out the hard way a few years back. It wasn’t very pleasant.” A pause. “We need somewhere safe to go for a quick land and search outside our ship.” She began scrolling through the vessel’s navigation computer. “We’re close to Tatooine… but that’s Hutt controlled.”
She hummed. “Geonosis is close by too. As is Naboo.” Ahsoka shook her head. “That’s far too risky.”

“We will need to go somewhere with tools to pry the tracker off. I’m not sure if what we have will do the trick,” Rey muttered. “Tatooine has that if need be. Anakin said there are places to land and shops to trade for needed things. Food and water even. Mechanics if we’re desperate.” So much more than Jakku ever had in her time.

“I have money to pay if we need it,” Breha told the cockpit. “Imperial credits in my bag. Or jewelry if credits are not accepted.” She looked between Rey and Ahsoka. “My vote is for Tatooine.”

Rey nodded slowly. It made the most sense to her. It had the greatest potential in case they needed some help. “I concur.” She gave a curt nod of her head.

Ahsoka blew out a long breath. “Alright… Tatooine it is.” She looked over to Rey. “Hopefully we don’t stay for too long. I don’t want Jabba the Hutt to notice us.”

Rey nodded once again, and selected the appropriate coordinates for the desert planet. “We’ll travel there after the next jump… which should be completed in only a few minutes.”

“Good shooting, Breha,” Ahsoka piped up after a few minutes of silence.

“Thanks,” Breha huffed in laughter. “Never thought I’d be the gunner in a star ship before. But, I believe I could get the hang of it.”

A bleep from the console. They were about to leave hyperspace once again.

Rey held her breath as the Ghtroc 720 dropped roughly out of hyperspace. She blinked in relief — no one was present at this particular jumping point.

She hit the button to select the next jump location — one that would take them closer to Tatooine. “Three, two, and one. Off we go.”
The vessel jumped once more for the short jaunt over to Tatooine, only lasting a few minutes before the sandy planet came into view in front of them.

“Alright.” Ahsoka switched on the radio. Waiting for someone to hail the vessel. “I’m not sure if we just find a place to land here, or…”

“Do you have an idea of where we should go town-wise?” Breha asked. She was beginning to remove the outer layers of her outfit. Slowly but surely beginning to strip away the regalness that gave away her identity as the Queen of Alderaan.

“Mos Espa has a spaceport and a junk shop for certain,” Ahsoka informed her as she steered the vessel towards the desert planet. “From what Anakin has told me, it’s slightly safer than Mos Eisley is. As long as we don’t gamble.” She took a quick look at the console before making a slight adjustment with the controls. “We will be there in a couple of minutes. I’ll land just outside the town. Keep away from as many people as I can. Hopefully we can be out of here in well under an hour.”

Rey continued to peer out the viewport of the vessel. Watching in awe at the mountains of sand. The suns bleaching everything a pale, washed out beige.

“Are we all clear?”

Rey shook her head at herself, her attention back on her task. “Yep. We are clear to land. I see a flat area just outside Mos Espa. Looks sturdy enough for our vessel.”

“I see it.” Ahsoka brought the Ghtroc 720 into land. Forgoing the gentleness of her previous landings.

They were in a hurry — niceties were forgotten.

“Grab the tool kit and see what you can find,” she told Rey. “I’ll head out to help with the search once I’ve shut her down.”

“What do you need me to do?” Breha asked.
“I need you to listen in on the radio — make sure there is no chatter from Imperial ships around here.” Ahsoka frowned. “Also listen to see if anyone here will hail us asking who we are. I doubt it, but tell me if anyone is. If you hear anything at all.”

Breha nodded her understanding.

Rey stood up from her seat making her way towards the maintenance cupboard. Pulling open the door, she quickly snatched the tool kit before exiting the vessel.

She winced as she stepped outside in the bright suns. It was midday — the hottest time of day on any world. Extra hot on a planet with more than one sun heating it up.

She swore to herself as she stopped to wrap part of her cloth wrappings around her head. She didn’t miss this at all. The heat. The scorching air. The blinding brightness of the sands. The only thing she was missing were her tinted goggles shading her eyes, allowing her to see better.

She dropped the bag on the ground and began rummaging through it, searching for a pry bar and a clamp to remove any possible tracker.

The engines were shut down completely, allowing Rey to climb up on top of the ship to begin her search.

Slowly and systematically she began a grid search looking for the tiny beacon. The heat was permeating her wraps, causing her to begin to sweat.

She groaned as she wiped at a brow. She wasn’t used to this anymore. She had become used to the lush, wet environment that the rebellion had set up base in.

Shaking her head at her complacency, Rey turned and continued the search for the tracker. Out of the corner of her eye she spotted a hooded Ahsoka beginning the search from the ground. Meticulously and thoroughly combing through every inch of the vessel.

At least twenty minutes had passed before Rey called out to Ahsoka. “I found something!” She dropped to her knees, setting her tools down beside her.
The tracker was blinking red.

Rey glared at it before grabbing the pry bar to slide underneath the beacon.

“Yep, that’s definitely a tracker,” Ahsoka said from beside her. “I was wondering why they backed off.”

"Karking sleemo’s," Rey swore under her breath. She rammed the pry bar against the device. Frowning when it refused to move.

“Here.” Ahsoka grabbed the clamp and placed it around the tracker before leaning hard on the tool. “Try again,” she muttered. Straining.

Rey rammed the pry bar once again — this time it was able to slip underneath ever-so-slightly.

She wiggled and jigged her tool, trying desperately to loosen the tracker. Harder and harder she rammed the pry bar, swearing and sweating profusely as the beacon began to lose its hold on the vessel.

“What a piece of banthashit,” Rey muttered as finally the tracker popped loose.

Ahsoka snorted as she grabbed the device before chucking it as far as she could away from the ship. “I saw nothing on the sides or underneath the ship.” She stood up. “I’ll help you finish the search up here. Hopefully they only landed one of these nasty little buggers.”

“You didn’t destroy the tracker.” Rey frowned as she returned to her feet.

Ahsoka shook her head. “They’d know that we found it if I did. This way they’ll waste their time searching for us here while we are long gone.”

Rey nodded in understanding.

Twenty minutes later, and another tracker removed, the three of them began to lift off from
“We did good today ladies,” Ahsoka stated proudly as the vessel jumped into hyperspace once again. “Now all I hope is that everyone was able to get away before the Empire showed up.”

Rey hummed her agreement, before closing her eyes.

This past day and a half had far too much excitement for her.

She was exhausted.

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“Lord Vader sir.”

Officer Jissard came to a stop in front of him. He was clutching the pillow Rey stole from his meditation room. “We found this, along with some bedding that was left behind. Nothing else worth noting has been found.”

Vader gave a curt nod of his head.

“Why would you bring a blasted pillow?” Tagge snarled at his officer. “It’s not going to tell us anything of importance.”

“On the contrary,” Vader began. “This is a meditation pillow, used traditionally by those within the Jedi Order.” He turned slightly to watch Tagge’s expression. “It confirms that what is left of the Jedi scum are aiding the Rebellion. Knight Kenobi most likely — he always stuck to his traditions.” He took the pillow from Jissard. “Inform the Emperor that there is evidence of one Obi-Wan Kenobi residing here with the Rebellion.” He watched as Tagge blanched in shock at the order.

“We are one step closer to catching and defeating the Rebel Alliance,” Vader addressed those present in the former command center. “Continue searching for any sort of technology — perhaps something of importance got left behind. It will help us defeat them once and for all!” He clenched
his fist for good measure. Amused at everyone’s fear of him.

He grinned at Tagge’s annoyance, before nodding curtly at Officer Jissard.

He quickly left the abandoned command center, his cape billowing behind him as he made his way through the winding hallway towards the hangar.

He needed to get into contact with Kenobi to make certain everyone was alright.

And to check in with him about the pillow.

He had left it behind for a reason, he was certain. He just didn’t know what exactly Obi-Wan was telling him.

Note:

I suppose I should tell people that I have a tumblr account.

Here's the link if you would like to say 'Hello' or ask any questions: Tumblr

Please do be kind. ❤
Chapter 28

Vader stood on the bridge of the *Executor*, watching Commander Tagge closely as he gave the order to his troopers to prepare to search Tatooine.

The rebel vessel that had apparently evaded Imperial Fighters had been tracked to his home world. He didn’t know what vessel it was, and was hesitant to ask. But, this was something that couldn’t be avoided. He needed to know.

“Was the vessel fleeing D’Qar?” He asked one of the officers. He couldn’t hide the curiosity in his voice, even with his vocoder.

“No sir,” the junior officer winced at his slip. “No Lord Vader, sir,” he corrected quickly. “It appeared on the other side of the asteroid field — like it was returning to the planet.”

Vader quirked his head, knowing instantly just who was on the vessel. Dread pooled in his stomach. “And you’ve traced them to Tatooine?”

A curt nod. “We have sir — Lord Vader, I mean — they were hit with two tracking beacons before they were able to jump to hyperspace. Both are still on the planet, indicating that the rebels thought it safe to hide there. Perhaps to regroup, or perhaps to get into contact with the rest of their fleet.”

*Or they removed both tracking beacons before fleeing once again,* Vader thought to himself. He didn’t voice his thoughts; those on the *Executor* didn’t need to know how slippery Ahsoka could be when needed. She survived the purge due to her ability to adapt on the fly. The last twenty years illustrated that skill clearly. It was something those from the Core Worlds failed to understand time and time again.

The absolute necessity to figure out a way to survive. Against all odds.

He blinked, allowing himself a small smirk of pride before giving the junior officer a curt nod of his head. “How long until we arrive at our destination?” He turned his attention back to Tagge, waiting for his answer.
“In under five minutes.”

“I will be joining your search party,” Vader informed him. “From which hangar are they leaving?”

Tagge frowned, sighing. “My men are well-trained, Lord Vader. But, they will be leaving from the central hangar.”

“Good.” He turned to leave. “Inform them that I am on my way,” he ordered Tagge as he strolled out of the command bridge.

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Vader turned around to take in the scene before him.

His assumption was correct — Ahsoka, Rey, and Queen Organa had been able to remove the tracking beacons successfully before disappearing from the dust bowl he once called home.

The two trackers had been tossed aside. Some ways away from where Vader was standing now, near the distinctive imprints left over from the landing gear of the Ghtroc 720.

Ahsoka had landed hard. Likely in a hurry to get rid of the beacons.

Heavy footprints, indicative of someone jumping from a height. Two sets.

*Rey’s and Ahsoka’s,* the Force murmured in his ear.

“Lord Vader, sir.” A trooper come to a stop in front of him, his nervousness apparent. “What would you like for us to do?”

He was afraid that he and his men were about to be punished for their failure to find the vessel.
“Begin questioning the nearby shops and residents if they saw anything,” he began. “The type of vessel, what the people looked like.” He quirked his head. “Question only. No harm, no threats. This is a Hutt controlled world, we mustn’t overextend our hand.” A banthashit excuse, but he wasn’t interested in dealing with the Hutts. Especially Jabba.

CD-1713 nodded curtly. “Understood Lord Vader, sir.” He left to relay the orders to those under his command.

Vader remained standing in the middle of the disturbed sand. His thoughts whirring; trying to figure out what he needed to do to keep his Padawan safe.

*Information.*

It was the one thing he kept coming back to.

He needed to gather as much information as possible in order to protect his Padawan and his children.

It was the only thing he could do that wouldn’t show his hand to Sidious. He wasn’t ready to fully defect. The Force had been hissing at him continuously that he needed to wait a bit longer. That he needed to be patient. *Smart.*

He snorted at himself. He had never been smart. Not when family was involved. Not when someone he cared deeply about was involved.

Perhaps he’d finally learn the lesson this time. Perhaps he’d be smart for once.

Sometimes — *sometimes* — it paid off to be patient and cautious.

He knew that; understood it even. It was just not something he did. Patience was a characteristic found in other people. Not him.

He closed his eyes as he continued to rein in his emotions. His need to lash out and react to the shitstorm that was going on all around him.
“Lord Vader, sir.” CD-1713 had returned from Mos Espa.

Quicker than Vader was anticipating. He blinked open his eyes at the sound of the trooper’s voice. Standing next to him was a little boy. Ten years old at the most.

*Terrified.*

Of course he was. He had a reputation after all.

“What have you found?” He asked the trooper, trying to ignore the little boy as best as he could.

CD-1713 gestured to the boy. “The child here says he saw a ship land here not four hours ago.”

Vader sighed mentally at himself. He couldn’t ignore him. Unfortunately.

“What kind of ship?” He asked him. Blunt. Hoping that he had no clue what he was looking at.

The boy shrugged. “I don’t know.” A lie. “It — it looked kinda like a turtle.” He was dumbing himself down. Using his age to deceive them.

Vader grinned to himself, thankful for his mask. The child knew the exact make and model of vessel that landed. He’d bet his suit on it.

“Where did you find him?” He asked the trooper.

“He was at a repair shop in town… looked like he just cleaned the place from what I could tell. The owner said he was around here on his break. Saw the whole thing.” CD-1713 looked down at the boy, his confusion humming strongly. His uncertainty.

Vader crossed his arms across his chest. “Did you see anyone leave the vessel?”
The child nodded hesitantly. “Two people. A girl at first. She had a scarf to protect herself from the suns.”

“And the other?” CD-1713 asked.

The boy frowned. “She was a togruta, I think. She hid underneath a cloak, but not before I saw her…” he gestured to his head.

“Montrals and lekku,” Vader supplied to the child, knowing full well that he had unlikely seen many togruta here on Tatooine.

“How long ago did the two fugitives leave?” CD-1713 asked the boy.

He shrugged once again. “After my break ended. I didn’t see them take off.” He hesitated. “I heard the ship though. We don’t get a lot in this area outside the town. I was inside the shop when they left. Maybe an hour later.” The child grimaced. “Possibly less than an hour… I’m not sure. I try not to think about time like that. It was after my break but before the days end at the shop.” He looked up at Vader, narrowing his eyes. “I need to get back to work. Do you have any more questions?”

“Tagge might,” CD-1713 informed Vader. “We should take the child to him.”

Vader quirked his head at the boy. He was looking at him with fear in his eyes. He shook his head ever so slightly at him.

Slave.

“He cannot leave the planet,” he told the trooper. Annoyed at his ignorance. “He must remain on the surface at all times.”

“What? Why?” CD-1713 was completely lost at their nonverbal communication.

“I have a chip in my neck that prevents me from leaving Tatooine,” the boy informed the trooper.
“I’m a slave.” The child crossed his arms across his chest as if to challenge the soldier.

“The Empire doesn’t allow slavery.” CD-1713 was adamant. Disbelieving.

Vader rolled his eyes at the naivety. “This is a Hutt controlled world. They allow slavery.”

Shock hummed around the little group.

“He will stay here,” Vader informed the trooper. “He has informed us of all he knows. The boy must get back to work.”

“Thank you,” the boy looked up at Vader with a questioning look in his eyes. “I must help feed my guardian. They’re sick and can’t work.”

Vader gave him a curt nod of his head. “Take him back to his place of employment. Round up the rest of your command. We have all we need.”

He needed to get back to his own Destroyer and notify Obi-Wan that the Ghtroc was no longer safe to use regularly.

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“Attention, attention. This is a scavenger looking for a safe place to land. I repeat: I am a friendly scavenger searching for a safe place to call home.”

Rey continued to fly the Ghtroc 720 closer to the surface of Ajan Kloss. Waiting for someone on the other end to respond.

“Maybe they haven’t set up the communications yet,” Ahsoka suggested quietly from the co-pilot seat. “It’s only been a few days at most.”

“We don’t even know if they’re here.” Rey whispered. She couldn’t hide the dread from her voice. The fear.
The radio on the vessel cackled a bit, as if someone on the other end was grabbing the transceiver to reply.

“Attention scavenger,” Obi-Wan’s voice broke through the silence. “Welcome home. We are awaiting your arrival.”

Rey sighed in relief. “Understood. Over and out.” She switched the radio off once more before adjusting the trajectory of the vessel.

“The base is located in the northeastern quadrant,” Ahsoka told her as she began preparing to start the landing procedures.

“It’s quite hidden in the jungle here, so I’ve heard,” Breha informed Rey as she sat down in her seat. “Hopefully we’ll be able to spot a few of our ships from the air.”

Rey nodded her agreement as she broke through the atmosphere of the jungle moon.

A few minutes of silence as she flew the Ghtroc above the moon, searching for any indication of the hidden rebel base.

“There!” Ahsoka pointed out to the right of the vessel.

Rey followed where she was pointing. Off in the distance she could spot a handful of vessels parked in a small clearing in the jungle.

Sighing in relief, she steered the vessel towards the hidden base.

Descending towards the ground, Rey saw a spotter outside in front of the vessel directing her to pull into the hangar.

She and Ahsoka made a few quick adjustments in the vessel’s trajectory before carefully pulling into the hangar.
Rey frowned as she began shutting down the Ghtroc 720. “Why are we indoors so quickly? It seems odd doesn’t it?”

Ahsoka nodded slowly as she unbuckled her harness. “We can ask Obi-Wan what’s going on.” She gestured towards the viewport. “He’s just outside.”

“Perhaps we were identified,” Breha suggested quietly as she stood up from her seat. She gave Rey a kind smile. “You fly very well dear. Where did you learn?”

Rey grinned sheepishly at the woman. “I rebuilt a flight simulator in my home on Jakku. Learned from that, basically.”

A surprised look crossed Breha’s face. “That is very interesting to hear.” She motioned for Rey to leave the cockpit before her.

Rey made her way down the ladder into the seating area of the vessel where Ahsoka was waiting for the two of them.

Breha stepped off of the ladder and onto the more steady floor of the vessel. “Were you able to test out a number of different vessels, or were you limited to certain ones?”

“I could try out almost anything,” Rey admitted as she grabbed her bag. “I stuck with only a few though. Liked the way they felt better than the others.”

“Of course.” Breha smiled at Rey. She exhaled deeply. “Let’s face the music, shall we?” She looked pointedly at Ahsoka, giving her a subtle nod. “I’d like to know what happened, in the finest detail.”

Rey smirked as Ahsoka opened the loading ramp to allow the three of them to exit.

The trio came to a stop in front of both Obi-Wan and Bail, who greeted his wife with a kiss to her cheek.
“Let’s head into the Tantive IV,” Bail said quietly to the women. “We can talk more freely there, away from prying eyes and ears.”

Rey caught Obi-Wan’s eye, throwing him a questioning look.

He gave her a subtle nod before breaking eye contact. “We are all alright. We got away in time.” He hooked Rey’s hand in the crook of his elbow and did the same to Ahsoka on the opposite side of him. “But… we all need to talk; catch up on everything.”

The group made their way up the ramp into the Organa’s vessel quickly finding somewhere to sit in order to have a thorough discussion of the goings on for the last few days.

Rey quirked her head as Obi-Wan powered the ramp closed.

“Mon will want to be filled in shortly. She’s just extremely busy right now with other responsibilities,” he answered her unspoken question. Sighing as he found a place to sit down.

He looked tired. Burned out.

Old.

“How are you doing?” Ahsoka asked him quietly. Her concern humming around the room.

Obi-Wan waved her off kindly. A small grin on his face. “I’m just tired. In desperate need of a good rest.” He looked at Rey with kind eyes. “I was worried that you might have been captured. Or worse.”

“Pfft,” Ahsoka huffed kindly. “We got hit with tracking beacons, but were able to remove them on Tatooine. Breha was able to shoot down a few TIEs before we jumped back into hyperspace.”

“Breha?” Bail’s shock was pulsating around the vessel.

She grinned at her husband, eyes crinkling in amusement. “Just one TIE. Rey got us back into
Rey smiled at Breha. They had all worked together extremely well. They made a good team.

“We were able to flee D’Qar relatively quickly.” Obi-Wan began. “One of our patrols spotted what looked like a meteor falling to the surface of the planet. Because we were aware of the use of probe droids by the Empire, she knew to take a closer look.” A pause. “It was soon determined that the meteor was in fact a probe droid. And our patrol, Shara Bey, notified the base immediately. Informing us that we all needed to leave.”

“We got away from D’Qar just as the first Imperial ship arrived,” Bail continued the tale. “Because of that, they knew instantly that it truly was a Rebellion Base.” He frowned. “I assume that once you ladies arrived, there were plenty of vessels?”

Ahsoka nodded. “Half dozen at least. Including a huge one, which I am assuming is the Executor.” She shuddered in response. Realizing just how close the three of them had come to being killed or captured by the Imperial Forces.

Obi-Wan nodded. “Anakin wasn’t able to get to D’Qar right away. His Destroyer had to wait for him to arrive from his meeting with you three before they made their way over to the planet.” He frowned. “From what I could tell from his messages, he was aware of a potential rebel vessel fleeing prior to him arriving. I believe that one was the last to leave D’Qar. He hadn’t arrived yet when you three dropped out of hyperspace. The Devastator arrived shortly afterwards — almost got fired on by the Executor apparently. According to Anakin, the fool Commander couldn't tell the difference between a rebel ship and an Imperial one,” he said with a wry grin on his face. Pausing briefly before continuing on. “It took the Imperial vessels there some time before they were able to track the ship to Tatooine.”

Ahsoka hummed. “They should really update their tracking abilities if that is the case. We went directly there to rid ourselves of the beacons. It was pretty straight forward, to be honest with you. The more I think about it, the more I’m surprised they didn’t send Destroyers to the closest planets from D’Qar to meet us there. It’s what I would’ve done. It’s definitely what Anakin would have done. Anyone with decent military training would know to do that.”

“Which is why Commander Tagge is losing his control of the Executor as well as the Death Squadron,” Breha told the room quietly.

Rey nodded slowly at the shock emitting from both Bail and Obi-Wan. “Tagge was supposed to head the blockade above Tureen, but instead relegated it to someone else. The Emperor has named
one Darth Vader as the commander of both the Executor, and the new leader of the Death Squadron.” She paused, rolling her eyes at the Emperor’s actions. “Anakin said he’ll take full control in a couple of weeks.”

“And Tagge?”

Breha hummed. “General Skywalker mentioned that Tagge will be taking control of the Harbinger’s crew… at least officially.”

“He knows that Palpatine is likely isolating him from his trusted soldiers to prevent a coup.” Ahsoka narrowed her eyes at Rey. “He mentioned that the Emperor is a firm adherent to the Rule of Two.”

“What is that?” Rey questioned her, before looking at Obi-Wan. “What’s the Rule of Two?”

Obi-Wan sighed. “It’s a philosophy of the Sith. The master, with the knowledge and skill of the dark side, and an apprentice learning and waiting to take the master’s place.” He frowned. “The apprentice takes over the role of master when they kill them, and in turn, begins to train their own apprentice continuing the tradition of the Sith.”

“And the Emperor believes that I am Master Anakin’s apprentice, waiting for my Master to overthrow him before we rule the galaxy together as Sith.” Rey rolled her eyes at the absurdity of it all. “Is he really that clueless about Anakin? Does he honestly believe that Anakin has any desire to rule the galaxy as Emperor? He doesn’t have a political bone in his body. He hates politicians.”

Breha cleared her throat. “What he doesn’t understand — Palpatine that is — is that someone might want something for a reason other than power. That is all Palpatine thinks is important.” She shook her head. “He doesn’t understand love. Not really. He views it as a weakness, rather than the strength it truly is. Ironic really, considering love will be his downfall.” She pursed her lips, throwing Ahsoka a look.

The togruta grinned dryly, humming in agreement.

“You’re sure about that?” Bail asked his wife with uncertainty. “Not that I don’t disagree with love being a strength.” He held up his hands in a placating gesture.
Breha smiled at her husband, patting his thigh before hooking her hand in his own. “Have I ever been wrong, dear?”

Rey snickered quietly, catching Obi-Wan’s eyes.

Amusement was dancing in his eyes, along with slight confusion. He raised a single brow at Rey before clearing his throat. “So… restructuring of the Death Squadron; I assume the Devastator will now be a part of it?”

Rey nodded. “Anakin said he’d give them probe droids as well. He mentioned that it’ll take a couple of weeks to get everything sorted. Before he takes complete control, he said.”

Obi-Wan hummed in understanding. “He’s said in his messages that he is currently shadowing Tagge. I didn’t understand why initially, but the change in the command of the dreadnought and the change in the leadership of the Death Squadron are definite reasons why he would be doing such a thing.”

“Are his messages the reason why you had us pull into the hangar?” Ahsoka asked the Jedi Knight.

Obi-Wan nodded, hiding a yawn behind his hand. “Apparently someone saw you land on Tatooine. A child, according to Anakin. The young boy told him and one of Tagge’s stormtroopers that the vessel looked like a turtle and it had two women in it — a girl with a scarf, and a togruta.” He paused, choosing his words carefully. “We have yet to set up the majority of our command center. That’s where Mon is right now — overseeing everything. So I’m not certain if an alert for the vessel has been sent out galaxy-wide yet. Or if there will even be an official one at all. We haven’t heard much of anything at all. Just from Anakin who said to hide the ship for the time being away from view.”

“Damn,” Ahsoka muttered. “I liked that ship.”

Rey nodded her agreement. It was one of the few she liked to practice with on her simulator.

“It’s just for now,” Obi-Wan assured them. “I don’t think Anakin knows what will happen once the Emperor gets word about the 720 and you, Ahsoka. He’s just being cautious.” He rubbed his beard. “I don’t think he told anyone the make or model of the vessel — they are going off what the child said to them. It’s likely Anakin has assigned someone to search vessel databases looking for a starship that looks like a turtle.”
“He’s buying us time to make sure we’ve reached our new base,” Breha told those around her quietly. “He’s protecting his Padawan.” She looked at Rey pointedly. Amusement and understanding evident in her eyes.

Rey broke eye contact, nodding ever-so-slightly. Her Master was taking a huge risk for her. Again.

She wrapped her arms around herself. Self-conscious. It was a strange, unfamiliar feeling to have someone care about her as much as Anakin did. She swallowed before taking a deep breath.

*Master Anakin.*

She needed to keep reminding herself of his current role in her life. No matter what Breha or Ahsoka — or even she — thought about their closeness. Their strange connection and understanding of one another.

He was Master Anakin. She was Padawan Rey.

“I do have some bad news.” Obi-Wan broke the silence. He was watching Rey with a sort of sadness in his eyes.

She frowned. “What happened?”

He looked down at the floor of the ship. “I left your meditation pillow behind.” His eyes met Rey’s once again. “I needed to give Anakin a message. I barely had time to grab my own things, or any of the command center tech.” He sighed, rubbing his beard. “I left your pillow behind to give Anakin the heads up that you had yet to arrive at the base. I didn’t know what else to do. I didn’t have time to think, let alone send him a message via datapad.” He clasped his hands together. “I’m sorry.”

Rey shook her head at him. “It’s alright. It’s only a pillow.” She snorted softly. “I actually stole it from him. From his meditation chambers on his Destroyer. He had a huge pile of pillows in there. That one was the tackiest I could find.” She grinned at Obi-Wan. “I can find another pillow here if I need to… it’s not a big deal.”

Obi-Wan nodded in understanding. His relief hummed around the vessel. “How did everything else
go with your visit?” He was curious. Intrigued.

“We have something to focus on during our analysis of Draven’s datacard that he got from Piett.” Ahsoka grinned. “Anakin informed us that he has found out that the second Death Star has begun construction. He was able to set up some spy droids in the Imperial Center. The issue is, is that he doesn’t have a location of said construction.”

“But… he thinks that the flight plans may give us a hint of where it may be located,” Breha finished.

Obi-Wan nodded slowly. “Mon will be pleased.” He swallowed. “How did the other part of your visit go?” He looked between Rey and Ahsoka. “Have you figured out a plan to help him get out of his suit?”

Rey nodded.

“I have a contact that I trust,” Breha answered him. Drawing his attention to her. “I honestly believe that it can be done. We just need some time to get everything lined up and prepared.”

Obi-Wan gave her a curt nod of his head. His eyes back on the floor of the vessel. His guilt was humming softly around the ship.

“He doesn’t blame you,” Rey piped up quietly. “Not anymore at least. He knows that it was his actions that led to him being put in his suit. His choices. He knows that you did everything you could to stop it from going that far.” She quirked her head at the Jedi Knight. “If anything he blames himself… and perhaps Palpatine. Not you.”

“Thank you,” Obi-Wan muttered quietly, clearing his throat. Still focusing on the floor of the Tantive IV.

Silence as the occupants allowed the Jedi Knight get his emotions back under control.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat once more, before making eye contact with Ahsoka sitting across from him.
She had concern written on her face, evident for all to see.

Kenobi gave her a small grin. “We had a squadron of new-ish recruits come to D’Qar just after you three left. A few dozen new members. With a Captain to help with the fight to the Empire.” He rubbed his beard, choosing his words carefully. “Said Captain was annoyed that he had to wait so long to be allowed back in. Was off base when Mothma locked everything down.” He had a difficult time keeping his grin off his face. “He’s helping our ground forces set up the training facilities.”

Rey quirked her head at the togruta who was frowning in thought.

“Someone I know?” She asked Obi-Wan. “Or… someone you know?”

“Both.”

Ahsoka narrowed her eyes at Obi-Wan. “Who?”

Obi-Wan smiled widely. “Rex.”

Ahsoka gasped. “He’s here?” Her excitement was wafting hard around the vessel.

Obi-Wan nodded in confirmation. “He is. He’s been asking about you. I told him where you three had gone; who you were meeting with.” He grinned.

Ahsoka leaped up from her seat. “Rey… we have to go see him. I’d love to introduce you.” She gestured for Rey to get up from her chair. “Breha can fill Mothma in. We don’t need to be there.”

Rey threw Breha a questioning look as she slowly stood up from her seat. She didn’t know who this Rex fellow was. He had to be someone important to both Ahsoka and Obi-Wan.

“Go dear,” Breha assured her kindly. “I will speak with the chancellor when she is ready for me.”

Rey gave her a curt nod before Ahsoka grabbed her hand, pulling her out of the vessel.
The two of them made their way through the base, searching for the training facility. Rey frowned. “Who is Rex?” She asked Ahsoka quietly.

The togruta turned to look at Rey with wide eyes. Shocked. She swallowed before replying. “He’s a captain from the Clone Wars. Part of the 501st Battalion. Anakin’s Battalion. As well as mine, I suppose.” She slowed down as they got closer to the location that housed the new training facility. “The 501st are nowadays colloquially referred to as Vader’s Fist.” She sighed. “Of course… most of the original troops have been killed…” she trailed off. Lost in a memory.

Rey could feel her pain. Heartache. She gave her hand a squeeze to try bring her comfort.

Ahsoka smiled at Rey, her eyes wet with emotion. “Rex is a clone. He was able to get his chip removed in time… before the order came through. Before the purge.” She sniffed. “We faked our deaths and went underground. Fled from the Empire. From Vader. Got into contact with the Rebellion eventually.” She cleared her throat. “He’s saved my life more times than I can count. I owe him everything.”

Rey nodded in understanding. “You miss him. You’re close.”

Ahsoka nodded. “I haven’t seen him in almost four years… technically.” She gave a sharp huff of laughter. “Only a year or so for me though. Either way it’s been too long. Far too long.” She gave Rey a grin as they reached the entrance into the training room. “You’ll like him. I promise.”

They both made their way into the room. A dozen people, both soldiers and civilians, were in the process of laying everything out. Determining the best floor plan for the facility.

Ahsoka cleared her throat as she came to a stop behind a bald man with an olive complexion. “Hello Captain. I heard from a friendly that you may need an extra set of hands.”

The man — Rex, Rey assumed — slowly began to rise up from his crouched position on the floor.

Rey could feel his anticipation humming strongly. His disbelief. His hope and joy. All warring with each other.
He slowly turned around to face the two of them. Confirming his suspicions.

“Soka?” His voice quivered with emotion. Barely suppressing a sob he took the togruta in for a bone crushing hug.

Rey took a step or two back to give them some privacy. She could hear them murmuring to one another. Explaining. Apologizing.

Ahsoka cleared her throat as she pulled back from Rex, wiping her eyes. She gave Rey a grin. “I’d like to introduce you to a friend of mine. Rex, this is Rey. She’s a Force sensitive training with myself and Obi-Wan.” Rex nodded in understanding at what wasn’t being said. She sniffed. “Rey, this is Rex. He used to work with the Jedi Order back in the day. Fought for us during the Clone Wars.”

“Hello,” Rey greeted the man quietly.

He gave her a grin and a nod of his head. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Rey.” His eyes drifted down to her lightsaber hooked on her belt. Recognition flickering across his face.

He exhaled slowly. Plagued by memories of a time not too long ago.

“Are you able to take a step away from here?” Ahsoka asked him quietly. Picking up on his emotions instantly. “Take some time to find a quiet place to talk. Catch up. Obi-Wan said he filled you in on a few things.”

Rey quirked her head.

Rex nodded. Rubbing at his white beard. “Yeah. Yeah, I can do that.”

Ahsoka hooked her hand in the crook of Rex’s elbow before reaching towards Rey to do the same with her free hand.

The three of them made their way out of the room, in search of somewhere private to speak with each other.
A few minutes were spent searching before they finally found a small room set aside from most everyone else.

“This should do,” Rey said to them as she pushed open the door further to allow everyone to enter.

Inside was an ancient table with a wooden bench seat. The room was dusty from disuse. Musty smelling from the damp environment of Ajan Kloss.

“This is perfect,” Ahsoka said to her as she made her way towards the bench.

Rey gently closed the door to allow for some privacy. Allowing the three of them to discuss all that had happened with each other over the past few years.

Ahsoka sighed, rubbing her face. “I don’t even know where to begin…”

Rey scrunched her eyebrows together in thought before looking at Rex who was still watching her closely. Curiously. Cautiously.

“How ‘bout I start?” She questioned them. “I think it’s a good place as any.”

Both Ahsoka and Rex gave her a nod.

“A little over a year ago,” she began quietly. “I woke up inside a storage closet of a Star Destroyer…”
“Wait.” Rex held up his hand to stop Ahsoka’s explanation of what went down on Malachor four years prior. “How long were you actually there?”

“Two weeks,” Ahsoka informed him quietly. “I was only waiting for two weeks before Rey and Obi-Wan showed up.” She gave her friend a small grin. “When I stepped out of the portal, I knew at once something was different. Less dark even though I was in a Sith Temple. I could feel the Sith influence there — I’m not denying that. It was slick as oil. But, I could also feel the galaxy all around me. Everything all interconnected. That felt different. It felt… hopeful.” She nodded at her explanation. “And then I felt the Death Star fire upon Alderaan; I felt billions of people die all at once.” She sniffed. “I believed the hope I had felt earlier was a lie. That the Sith Temple was toying with me.”

She swallowed, looking towards Rey who was leaning forward in her seat in anticipation. “A short time later Rey and Obi-Wan dropped out of hyperspace above Malachor. I could feel Obi-Wan searching for me. I could feel his Force signature. His warmth. His comfort. His light. He opened himself up completely to tell me that he was there.” She paused, gathering her emotions. “I used his light to climb out of the temple. I used his strength.”

“And then I told you I was from the future,” Rey chimed in quietly.

Ahsoka nodded. “And it all started to make sense. My feelings. The changes.”
Rey watched as Rex frowned. “What were the changes?”

“There have been so many changes.” Ahsoka laughed quietly. A soft chuckle. “I wouldn’t even know where to begin.” She pursed her lips, sharing a look with Rey. “Obi-Wan died on the Death Star in Rey’s past.”

Rex’s shock hummed around the room. He closed his eyes in understanding. “Vader.”

Ahsoka nodded. “Vader,” she confirmed.

“Why the hell would he have gone there? To the Death Star?” He glared at the two women. “It would’ve been suicide at best. Stupid.”

“Leia,” Rey replied quietly. “He went to rescue Leia. She’d been captured above Scarif and was awaiting her execution after Tarkin fired on Alderaan.” She looked down at the table. “Obi-Wan went there with Luke, Han, and Chewy to rescue her. He sacrificed himself to allow Luke and Leia and the others to get away.”

“Why though?” Rex frowned. “Not that I don’t like the princess — I do. But, I don’t understand why he would’ve gone in the first place to rescue her. Why him? I don’t understand the connection.”

Ahsoka grinned. “Leia, the adopted daughter of Breha and Bail Organa, has a brother.”

Rex nodded. “Okay,” he said slowly. His confusion was still evident.


Rex’s eyes grew. “Fucking stars.” He held his head in his hands. Elbows propped up on the table. “Twins?”

Rey nodded.
“There are two Skywalker kids running around?"

“Yep.”

Rex’s shoulders started shaking. His laughter was silent. “Karking shit disturbers, the lot of them.”

Rey couldn’t hide the smirk off of her face. “Leia was the General of the Resistance in my time.”

“She takes after Anakin,” Rex stated quietly. Trying to wrap his head around it all. “But with the ability to keep up with the politics of it all. A politician like her mother. Like her adoptive parents.” He frowned. “A dangerous combination according to some, I’m sure.”

Rey nodded in agreement.

“And Luke?” Rex asked her. His curiosity hummed around the room. “What was he doing?”

Rey frowned, looking down at the table in front of her. “Hiding.” She brought her gaze back up to meet Rex’s. Surprise swimming in his eyes. “Luke was hiding from everyone. I found him, on orders from General Organa, at the first Jedi Temple. He had turned himself off from the Force. Hid himself completely from everyone and everything.”

“Why?”

Rey swallowed. Shaking her head.

Ahsoka cleared her throat. “It’s complicated,” she sighed. Watching Rey closely. “It’s also not entirely understood.”

Rey sighed. “Some shit happened in my time, before I even got into contact with the Resistance; before I left Jakku. I don’t understand what exactly happened other than a student of Luke’s fell to the dark side.” She paused, choosing her words carefully. “From what I can tell, and from what Master Anakin has said, it’s likely that my Luke blamed himself for what happened. But… I don’t know more than that, unfortunately. I never got a chance to ask him before I arrived here, in this time.”
Rex nodded slowly. His mind whirring. “When you say they ‘fell to the dark side’ you mean another Vader happened?”

Rey broke eye contact, looking back down at the weathered surface of the table. She gave a shaky nod of her head. “Complete with a black helmet and red lightsaber.”

“Which is why we need to focus on the healing of everything,” Ahsoka cut in. “We all have to work together to bring balance. To prevent any of that from happening once again.” She frowned. “To prevent it from happening in the first place,” she corrected.

“What can I do to help?” Rex looked between Rey and Ahsoka. “Is there anything a lowly soldier like me can do?” He had a wry grin on his face.

Rey looked at Ahsoka as she nodded eagerly at him.

“There is actually,” she grinned. “Rey needs help with physical training. Strength training. Drills.” She pursed her lips, looking at Rey closely. “Something to control her anger besides meditation and speaking with Obi-Wan and I.”

“I’ve been better recently,” Rey insisted quietly.

“You have,” the togruta conceded. “But, only a few weeks ago you almost completely lost your shields because of Mothma.” She held up a hand at Rey. “Not saying it wasn’t justified. I had a difficult enough time holding onto my own shields with the shit she pulled. But… you cannot drop your shields, Rey.” She looked at Rey with understanding. “At all. The Emperor would find you and make you his own.” She sniffed. “Anakin would hate me; likely kill me too. It would tear him apart if the Emperor was to get his hands on you.”

Rey nodded in understanding. “I’ll work harder. I promise.”

Rex cleared his throat. “Growing up on Jakku — I assume you had a weapon or two to defend yourself?” He asked Rey quietly.

Rey frowned, nodding. “A quarterstaff. I scavenged it from the Ravager in the Starship Graveyard
on Jakku.”

“I have a couple quarterstaffs that you and I could spar with,” Rex suggested. “A bit of melee training may help with your anger.” He smirked. “It could be fun.”

Rey grinned. “I’d like that. It’s been too long since I’ve practised with one of those.”

Rex nodded as he rubbed his face and beard with both hands, sighing. “This is all so… strange.” He looked back and forth between Rey and Ahsoka. “Is time travel a common occurrence? Is it a common… thing?” He frowned at his question. Emotions were running rampant on his face. His eyes sad, thinking about the what-ifs.

“Obi-Wan mentioned that Yoda said it has occurred before,” Ahsoka informed him quietly. “It’s not common. Or controlled, I don’t think. But, Yoda mentioned that there was a record or two of it occurring in the Jedi Archives.”

“Anakin said to me that the Force most likely has an influence on it. That it is trying to fix what it deems to be a mistake. He said that the Force is always trying to bring balance, but that people keep fucking it up, causing it to remain unbalanced and out of sorts.” Rey frowned. “At least in my case… I’m not sure if that would apply to Ahsoka’s experience as well.”

“It could just be an effect of the portal,” Ahsoka muttered more to herself. “It wouldn’t surprise me if that were the case. I don’t think it’s a well understood thing, the world between worlds.”

“What happens once you do bring balance?” Rex asked Rey. A curious expression on his face. “Does it pull you back to the future?” He frowned at his choice of words.

Rey shook her head. “I don’t think so.” She tried to ignore the uneasy feeling in her stomach. “I hope not. I don’t have anyone there for me to go back to. I don’t have anything to go back to.”

“You belong here Rey,” Ahsoka assured her, reaching a hand out to grasp one of her own. “Your time is here and now. Not then.” She looked at Rey pointedly. “You belong here.”

Rey nodded curtly. Thankful for the reassurance.
“You mentioned you were with the Rebellion during your time though,” Rex questioned quietly. “Are they,” he paused, “Are they not your family?”

Rey shook her head. “I knew a handful of them for about a week before I arrived here in this time. I’m not sure if I’d call them family; perhaps friends at most. Close acquaintances. Prior to that I lived alone in a tipped over AT-AT Walker scavenging for scrap parts to get food and water. When I say I have nothing to go back to, I mean it.”

She could feel Rex’s understanding humming around the room. He gave her a small nod at her explanation.

Ahsoka cleared her throat. “Remember when we were on D’Qar, Rey. When you and Obi-Wan and I were all talking with one another, and you mentioned that you just wanted to find a sense of belonging.”

Rey nodded, she remembered that conversation well.

“Your belonging is here, with me and Rex and Obi-Wan. Your belonging is with Anakin, and even with Leia and Luke.” She smiled at Rey. “Not to sound cheesy and sentimental but, I honestly believe that you will live out the rest of your life here. You’ll grow old with us. Find peace with us. Be a part of everything — with us.” She smirked at Rey. “I have a pretty strong opinion that you’ll find love here too.” She told Rey teasingly, her eyes dancing with amusement.

Rey hid her grin as she focused on the table, her cheeks warm. Hiding her gaze from the knowing look of the togruta. “Maybe,” she admitted quietly, rolling her eyes.

“Uh huh.” Ahsoka snorted quietly. “Maybe my ass.”

“Have I missed something?” Rex broke up the bantering. “I thought Jedi were supposed to remain unattached.”

Ahsoka frowned, shrugging. “And look how that helped them.” She shook her head as she turned her attention to Rex. “The Jedi Order had a lot of rules and a lot of flaws — non-attachment was one of them. Telling someone that they aren’t allowed to love because they are force sensitive is stupid. It’s wrong.” She gave the room a curt nod of her head. “There is nothing wrong with having feelings — with having emotions. To deny that would deny your person and I won’t stand by that.”
“You really are hell bent on love… even after I asked both you and Breha to drop it, huh?” Rey couldn’t keep the annoyance out of her voice, no matter how slight it was.

Ahsoka looked sheepishly at Rey, shaking her head. “Nope. It’s important. I can feel it in my bones.” She sighed. “But, I apologize for bringing it up again.” She grinned at Rey apologetically.

Rey sighed. “It’s fine… I know you mean well.” She couldn’t hide the grin off of her face any longer. The heat in her cheeks. She looked up at Ahsoka sitting next to her.

Ahsoka winked at Rey, amusement etched on her face for all to see.

“Shut up,” Rey snapped kindheartedly.

Ahsoka burst out laughing as she wrapped an arm around Rey. Giving her a friendly squeeze.

“Never.”

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Rey blew loose strands of hair out of her eyes as she took a step back from Rex.

He too stepped away from her, taking time to catch his breath.

“Where are you from?” Rey asked him, curious. She had never heard much about the Clone Wars growing up on Jakku. It was also something General Organa seemed to mostly ignore during her history lesson.

She didn’t know much about the clones — the people created to fight a losing battle. She hadn’t been comfortable enough to ask Rex during their sparring sessions until now. Over a month after she had met him.

Rex grinned at her as he took a long drink from his water canteen. Almost as if he had been waiting for the question.
“Kamino.”

At Rey’s hesitant nod of her head he explained further.

“It’s an ocean planet, opposite of Jakku.” He sighed. “The Kaminoan’s are incredibly smart, known for their cloning technology. Palpatine took advantage of that… got them to create my brothers and I. He got them to create the perfect soldiers — loyal all the way to the end. No matter what.” He swallowed another sip of water. Emotions running rampant across his face.

“The inhibitor chips,” Rey muttered quietly. “Obi-Wan mentioned them to me after…” she stopped talking. Her thoughts drifting.

She looked down at the quarterstaff still clutched in her hands, frowning.

“After what?” Rex broke the silence. His curiosity hummed strongly throughout the empty training facility.

Rey looked back up at him. Uncertain. Afraid.

She cleared her throat. “Before… before I came here, I heard someone order me to kill. A man’s voice. A simple order: kill him. Nothing more than that.”

Rex’s eyebrows were raised high on his forehead. His expression was not alarmed, but thoughtful. “And did Obi-Wan find anything?” He gave Rey a warm smile. “I assume he had a look after you told him about the voice.”

“He didn’t find anything,” Rey muttered. “I got everything scanned in this big machine. They couldn’t find anything.”

Rex shrugged. “Perhaps it was just an hallucination on your part?” He suggested, rubbing his beard. “Could you have been starving or severely dehydrated when it happened? I assume it wasn’t always easy to get food and water on a planet like Jakku.”

Rey frowned, uncertain. “I don’t… I don’t think so. At least no more than usual. I was twelve
when it happened the first time. But, I was already scavenging better than most everyone else on Jakku. I used my size and knowledge to get at the stuff that would allow me to get water and ration portions.” A pause. “I needed to. By that age I was regularly propositioned by others… offered more food and water if I personally serviced certain individuals. Punished if I refused.”

She could see the anger in Rex’s eyes. His disgust at what she had to deal with on Jakku.

He swallowed, his anger slowly disappearing off of his face. His emotions once again under control. “What happened when you heard the orders the first time?” He leaned his quarterstaff up against the wall.

“A traveller came into my home in the middle of the night. Grabbed me as I was sleeping.” Rey swallowed, remembering the night all too well. It was one of her recurring memories; a recurring nightmare. Getting snatched from behind. “I fought back. Heard the voice tell me to kill him.” She shrugged. “I choked him to death. Held onto his throat as he tried to pry me off of him. It took forever, but eventually he stopped fighting back. I dropped his body off in the middle of the trading outpost on Jakku. Took his speeder and went about my day.”

Rex gave her a curt nod. “Good for you.”

“The second time it happened,” Rey continued. “I was fighting the person I mentioned when we first met — the new Vader.” She paused, searching for the right words. “I sliced his face open with my lightsaber. He fell down onto the ground. I had the upper hand. He was severely injured— he’d been hurt earlier. The voice told me to kill him.” She sighed. “I didn’t though. I hesitated after stepping closer to him to finish the fight and the ground split open. Splitting us apart.”

Rex nodded slowly. “The fact that you hesitated tells me that you don’t have an inhibitor chip inside of you.” He smiled once more, his eyes sad. “If you did, you wouldn’t have hesitated at all. You would’ve completed your mission without question.”

Relief hummed strongly around Rey. She was unable to hold her feelings behind her shields. She sighed, nodding.

“Other than the voice — which I don’t think I have an answer to, at least not a good one — was there any other reason for Obi-Wan believing you to have a chip in your head?”

Rey looked down at the floor of the training facility. “Anakin thinks my parents are Imperial
scientists.” Quiet. Barely louder than a whisper. It was something she didn’t want to admit. Didn’t want to voice out loud. “There’s a not-so-secret top secret research base on Jakku. The remnants were still there in my time. Master Anakin thinks my parents worked there after the Empire fell.” She sniffed. “But, I know that they are scavengers like me. Were scavengers.” She sighed. “I dunno. I’m not sure what to believe.” She wrapped her arms around herself, self-conscious. “That’s what I remember. That’s all I can remember.”

“What did the base research?” Rex questioned her; concern in his eyes. “Do you know?”

Rey shook her head. “I’ve no idea.”

Rex hummed to himself quietly. “I’m not sure what to say, Rey.” He sighed; his eyes tired. “I think you’re a good person. Everyone I’ve spoken with here says the same thing — you are good.” A pause. “Speaking as someone with experience in this particular area, I’ve come to learn that it doesn’t matter where or how you came to be. It doesn’t matter who you call your mother or father. What matters are your actions. What matters is how you treat people.”

Rey nodded, remaining silent.

“It’s alright to just be Rey of Jakku,” he told her quietly. “Just as it’s alright for me to be just Rex of Kamino.” He gave her a grin. “General Skywalker used to tell me and my brothers something before everything went to shit. Something important, that I think maybe you need to hear.” He looked at Rey closely, making certain she was listening. “You are a person. Your name is Rey, and you are no one’s weapon.”

Rey’s bottom lip quivered. Swallowing, she gave Rex a shaky nod of her head. “Thank you.”

Another smile. “Anytime.” He sighed. “I think it’s time for breakfast now. How about we end our training, get cleaned up, and go get some food.” He suggested to her. “How does that sound?”

Rey hummed. “Sounds like a plan. I’ll see you in the mess hall?”

Rex nodded at her. “Of course. I’ll catch you in a few.”

Rey said her goodbyes as she put away the quarterstaff she had been borrowing, and made her way out of the training facility.
She made her way down the narrow hallway, winding and weaving, before she finally reached the
door to her assigned quarters.

Pushing open her door, Rey made her way into her dimly lit room, waving the light source on.

It was a smaller room than the one on D’Qar. Equipped with only a narrow bunk and a tiny
refresher. Her clothing and old datapad she had her Jedi notes on remained in her bag on the floor
next to her bunk.

She sighed as she grabbed a change of clothes out of her bag and made her way into the refresher to
get cleaned up, ignoring the loud growl of her stomach.

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Rey shivered as she pulled her thin blanket up to her chin.

The desert was chilly at night; the cold cutting in deeply after the dry heat of the day.

She sniffed, wiping at her cheeks. Wiping away the evidence of her tears.

It had been another day gone without her mother or father returning to Jakku. Without her parents
coming back for her after promising her that they would.

She tried to get more comfortable in her little hammock, turning slowly to face the wall, away from
the blinking lights of the flight simulator that she had set up in her home. In her AT-AT Walker.

Rey blinked her eyes closed.

She couldn’t risk not getting enough sleep. It would lead to sloppiness when she went scavenging
during the day. Practically guaranteeing her some sort of injury.
It was something she couldn’t afford to happen. Not anymore. Plutt had seen to that when he refused to give her decent sized ration portions.

All because she had brushed off his advances. All because she refused that traveller's advances.

She exhaled slowly, trying to calm her mind.

She didn’t know how much longer she’d be able to remain safe here, on Jakku. It wasn’t safe for girls like Rey.

It wasn’t safe for any woman.

Something she learned rather quickly in her group lodging when she was smaller. The screams echoing throughout the night. The cloth walls of the numerous lodgings at Niima Outpost failed to mask the sounds of the attacks.

Rey swallowed, her throat tight as she tried desperately to shake the memories out of her head. She didn’t want to remember those sounds. She didn’t want to remember the injuries evident on her fellow female scavengers the following morning.

She covered her ears with her hands, desperate for some sleep. Squeezing her eyes shut tightly.

The sound of her breathing accompanied the random creaks and groans of her AT-AT as the night continued to cool down.

Soothing.

Comforting.

Eventual sleep.

Something grabbed Rey from behind, waking her up instantly from her deep sleep.
A large hand was around her mouth and nose, making it difficult for her to breathe as she was roughly pulled out of her hammock.

She screamed anyway. Reaching desperately behind herself to get away from whomever had gotten ahold of her.

She stomped down hard on the inside of a leg. Her heel making contact with a knee.

A pained yell erupted in her ear, but the person — the man — still had a hold on her.

She jabbed her elbow hard into the man’s ribs. Kicking and flailing until she was dropped from his grasp.

Spinning around, she took in her attacker.

It was the man from earlier in the day.

The traveller who wanted her to fly away with him in his garbage vessel.

The creep.

She growled at him as he glared right back. Ready to fight. Ready to defend.

She refused to be another victim on Jakku.

“Kill him,” a man’s voice murmured in her head.

Rey twitched slightly at the unknown voice. The order. A matter of fact.
She leaped up towards her attacker, taking advantage of his shock that someone as small as her would attack someone as large as him. Her hands found his neck and she began to squeeze as tightly as she could while the man tried desperately to pry her off of him.

She wrapped her legs around his torso, hanging on tightly as he began to crash into everything around her home in a futile attempt to break her hold on him.

Slowly the creep began to weaken. His blows were now half-hearted. No longer jostling. No longer hurting.

Still Rey held on. Focused on her task. On her orders.

Rey snarled at the man as he dropped down hard on his knees. His eyes widened in fear as he looked into her own.

He understood his mistake.

He understood that the little girl he had set his sights on was going to kill him with her bare hands.

Rey squeezed even harder, feeling a rush of energy hum all through her. All the way down to her fingers.

Power.

Sick, wet choking sounds as the traveller tried desperately to take in air. Rey could feel his panic. His fear.

The man’s weight shifted as he toppled onto his side on the floor.

Rey toppled with him. Watching, waiting. Making certain the creep was dead.

A moment or two, the only sound was Rey’s heavy breathing.
She pulled her hands off of the dead man’s throat. Untangled her legs from his body. Pushed herself away from the body, gaining some much needed distance from her attacker.

She peered down at her hands. Tingling from use.

She swallowed, gasping for breath.

What she had just done slowly began to sink in.

Rey began to sob.

Heart wrenching sobs as her adrenaline began to wane.

“Rey?”

Her head jerked up at the raspy voice.

Anakin was sitting in her only chair, staring back at her. Concern written all over his face.

She blinked.

It was just a nightmare. A memory.

“You need to wake up Rey,” he rasped at her once he knew he had her attention. “Wake up sweetheart.”

She closed her eyes tight, willing herself to waken. When she opened her eyes once again, she found herself laying in her bed. Tangled up in her blanket.
She twisted around to face the rest of her room. To get out of her bunk.

Anakin was watching her closely. Sitting on some unseen thing in his hyperbaric chamber.

“Rey,” he rasped once again. “It was just a bad dream.”

She shook her head, wiping at her cheeks. “A memory,” she corrected quietly as she sat up in her bed. “I really killed him. I really choked him to death.”

“When you were twelve?” Her Master questioned her.

A jerky nod of her head.

She looked down at her hands in her lap. “I-I used the dark side to kill him, didn’t I?” She peered at Anakin, waiting for him to answer her. Waiting for him to tell her what she already knew. “I Force choked him.”

“You did,” he confirmed quietly. Honest.

She sniffed. Unable to look at him anymore. Ashamed.

“Rey… I need you to listen to me very closely. Can you do that for me?”

Clearing her throat, she gave a shaky nod of her head. Indicating she had heard him. That she was listening.

“You were fighting for your life,” Anakin began quietly. “Fighting someone a hell of a lot bigger than you, and a hell of a lot stronger than you.” He paused, choosing his words carefully. “You were afraid — terrified — and rightly so.” He looked at Rey closely. “You were a child without any training in the Force. You didn’t even know you had it, Rey.” He took a short breath. “You just did what came naturally in a situation like that. Nothing more. It doesn’t mean you are dark. It just means that you unknowingly let your emotions — your fear — control you that one time. That doesn’t make you bad, it just makes you human.”
Rey nodded shakily. Still refusing to meet her Master’s eyes.

“And I’ll be honest,” Anakin continued, his pride beginning to hum around the room. “That asshole deserved what he got. There’s nothing wrong with defending yourself from fuckers like him.”

A shaky huff of laughter, Rey wiped her cheeks once again. “Is that my Master talking, or…” She let the rest remain unspoken as she raised her eyes to look at Anakin once again.

He had a slight grin on his face. His eyes narrowed almost comically. “I’d like to say it’s just your Master… but,” he shrugged, “who knows. It’s hard to tell sometimes.”

Rey nodded, straightening out her pyjamas. Going over what she had experienced years ago. Forgotten memories. “I think there’s something wrong with me.” Quiet admittance. She quirked her head at Anakin. “That was when I heard the man in my head. The first time I heard the orders: *kill him.*” She swallowed, her throat tight. “I remember the orders. I didn’t hesitate. I carried out my mission until it was complete.”

“Rey —”

She shook her head, cutting him off. “Rex said that because I hesitated on Starkiller Base that it was unlikely I had an inhibitor chip inside my head. But… what if he’s wrong? What if he’s mistaken?”

“Obi-Wan and the healer already searched you,” Anakin told her quietly. Trying to reassure her. “They couldn’t find anything, remember?”

Another shake of her head. “I was born ten years after the fall of the Empire. *Ten years.* Do you honestly think that the technology to control people wouldn’t have been updated at all in that time? That it wouldn’t have been updated from before the Clone Wars to when I was born?” She could feel her heart beginning to race; her fear beginning to hum. “That Palpatine wouldn’t have figured out a way to hide it better?”

She stopped her questioning, shocked. *What the hell was she saying? ImPLYing?*
Silence as she tried desperately to gain control over her whirring thoughts.

“My parents were junk traders,” she told herself quietly.

“They were junk traders,” she told her Master more firmly. He was watching her with concern. “I’m confused. My dream has confused me. My memories.” She needed to make her Master understand; make Anakin understand. “Palpatine has no control over me. None. My parents are junk traders. I don’t care how much you don’t believe me, it’s the truth.”

Anakin nodded slowly. “They were junk traders.” A quiet reassurance. A quiet confirmation.

“Not Imperial scientists.”

Anakin nodded again. “Okay.” His hand reached out for something unseen by Rey. “They were just junk traders like you. Scavengers just like you.”

Rey nodded, sniffing. “That’s right.”

“Okay,” he repeated. His eyes left hers as he focused on whatever it was that he had grabbed. “How’re your shields?” He asked her without looking at Rey. His fingers wiggling slightly. Typing.

Rey shook her head as she checked in on them. “Fine. Strong still.”

“Good.” Anakin frowned. “Rex is with your rebellion?” He asked her as he continued to type.

Rey nodded. “Yeah… I thought I mentioned it earlier.” She sniffed. “He’d been on a recruiting mission when Mothma locked everything down because of the spy. He was able to return when Ahsoka, Breha and I were meeting with you.”

Anakin hummed. “He’s a good one to have with you. Smart. Good soldier.”

“He’s helping me train with a quarterstaff,” Rey chimed in quietly. “He was able to obtain some
Anakin smirked, raising a brow. “He stole them Rey. Raided a storage facility with his new squadron. Sneaky bastard.” He finished whatever he was typing and looked at Rey once again. “You like that quarterstaff, huh?”

Rey nodded. “It feels natural to me.”

“Maybe when all this is done you can build yourself a saberstaff,” he suggested quietly. “We can find you a couple of kyber crystals. I may know of a place or two that has them.”

“I’d like that,” Rey whispered.

He grinned. “Me too.” He looked over at something on his end. “It’s a major thing you know… making your own lightsaber. A coming-of-age sort of thing as a Jedi.”

A quiet knock on Rey’s door. She turned in her bunk slightly to look. “Someone’s just outside my room. I have to go.”

Anakin nodded in understanding. “It’s Obi-Wan. I let him know you had a bad dream.”

Rey’s eyes grew. “What? Why?”

“I care about you Rey,” Anakin told her hurriedly. “Please know that. Don’t forget it, alright?”

He faded away, leaving Rey alone in her room. Confused.

Obi-Wan knocked once more on her door. “Rey,” he called out to her quietly. “May I come in?”

Rey placed her feet on the cold floor and stood up slowly. Making her way towards the door before unlocking it and pulling it open.
Obi-Wan stood on the other side, dishevelled looking with his robes hastily thrown on and hair mussed up on one side.

“What’s going on?” Rey hissed as she beckoned him inside.

She watched as the old Jedi Knight made his way into her room.

He waited until she closed the door once more. “Anakin sent me a quick note. Said you had a nightmare about Jakku. About the traveller.”

Rey looked down at the floor. Self-conscious. Understanding what her Master meant with his parting words. She sighed, nodding. “It’s a recurring nightmare that I have. Not always, but enough for me to notice.” She swallowed, closing her eyes tight. “I realized tonight that I used the dark side of the Force to kill him. I felt it run through my bones. I felt it in my hands. I felt its power. I felt powerful.”

She met Obi-Wan's gaze dead on. “I Force choked that man when I was only twelve years old.”

“An understandable reaction to someone being attacked in the dead of the night,” Obi-Wan told her quietly. “I’m certain you were not the first force sensitive child to use the dark side when they found themselves in a life threatening situation. I’m also certain you won’t be the last.” He crossed his arms across his chest as he looked around her little room. “It doesn’t make you a bad person, Rey. It doesn’t make you dark.”

Rey nodded. She knew that. Anakin assured her of the same thing.

“What is really bothering you?” Obi-Wan was watching her closely. “I can feel remnants of your fear… of your anxiety. More than what a dream or memory would bring up. What’s really going on?”

A bleep came from Obi-Wan’s cloak pocket. Another message from Anakin. He raised an eyebrow at Rey, waiting for her response.

Rey swallowed. He’d either find out from her or her Master. Either way Obi-Wan would know. “I think there’s something wrong with me. I think I have an inhibitor chip in my head. I heard the order clear as day in my nightmare. I remember exactly how I felt. I didn’t hesitate. I did what I
was told. I carried out my orders without question.”

She wrapped her arms around herself. “I would like to get examined again. More thoroughly this time.” Her lip wobbled slightly. “I don’t want to hurt anyone.”

She peered at Obi-Wan with blurry, tear-filled eyes.

“Please.”
“You think she’s a clone?” Rex questioned quietly as he watched Rey get wheeled into the medical imaging room.

Obi-Wan shook his head. “No. Not at all.” He frowned. “I think she is unique. One-of-a-kind.”

“Prototype?”

He sighed, closing his eyes as the healer began walking Rey through the steps that they would be taking. “I honestly believe she is the child of a mother and a father, and also just happens to be Force sensitive.” He looked at Rex. “I agree with Anakin that her parents are likely not just scavengers trying to make a living. Jakku is not the most ideal location for scavenging. It is, however, a fantastic location to hide away from the New Republic. Blend in with the people there. No one would ask questions. No one would care.”

“Imperial,” Rex stated in confirmation. “Anakin picked up on it quickly, didn’t he? I suppose the fact that he is surrounded by Imperial Forces day-in day-out would make it easier to spot.”

“He also found evidence about the research base on Jakku when he was on the Death Star,” Obi-Wan supplied. “Of course, he didn’t save that information before the place was destroyed, but he did find something rather interesting about it.”

“Quit leaving me hanging General,” Rex chided him. “What the hell did he find?”

Obi-Wan smirked at Rex. “He found evidence that the facility focused on genetic engineering.”

Rex frowned. “So… clones.” He raised a brow at Obi-Wan, challenging him. He narrowed his eyes after a moment. “Although, the fact that she seems to be aging normally for a human is strange. It’s a huge risk to have a baby to care for on such a desolate planet. She’s lucky she didn’t die of starvation when she had to start looking after herself. Or get killed by some overeager, blue-balled pervert.” He shuddered at the thought.

Obi-Wan hummed in agreement. “Perhaps whatever they were researching there didn’t work. Or
they thought it didn’t and abandoned her there as a result.”

Rex turned in his chair to look at Obi-Wan directly. “What do you mean?”

“Anakin mentioned that he found it odd that someone as strong in the Force as Rey is, is from Jakku. Especially when taking into account the research base there.” Obi-Wan opened the file Anakin had recently sent him of questions he wanted asked. “Coincidence, he called it.”

“No such thing as coincidences General. You of all people know that.” Rex reminded him. A thoughtful expression on his face. “Just how strong is she in the Force?” Rex asked him. Curious. “Ahsoka mentioned it as well the other day.”

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard in thought. “I believe she’s on par with Anakin; his midichlorian counts were off the charts. Literally. Our readers didn’t go up that high — they didn’t need to prior to him arriving at the Temple. She sees the Force much like he did as a child. Like he did when he was my Padawan.” He paused, thinking. Wondering. He turned slightly in his chair to look at Rex. “Perhaps her midichlorian counts were manipulated, but not her Force sensitivity. That is entirely her. Maybe the manipulation is what the genetic engineering is focusing on. Somehow they figured out how to manipulate midichlorian counts.” He frowned at his line of thinking. “That would’ve enabled them to create the ideal apprentice for the Emperor. One who is exceptionally strong in the Force, and, as a result of that strength, susceptible to other people’s emotions and therefore easy to manipulate, much like Anakin was.”

“The perfect soldier,” Rex finished quietly.

“Indeed.”

Silence for a few moments as the pair of them watched the healer push Rey’s stretcher into the imaging machine.

“Why the questions?” Rex gestured to the datapad sitting in front of Obi-Wan.

“He thinks he triggers her somehow,” Obi-Wan replied quietly. “When he pushes her about her mother and father, she gets extremely defensive. Falls back on the same story about them being junk traders like her.” He sighed. “Anakin finds it odd.”
“Maybe they’re just junk traders,” Rex suggested half-heartedly as he got more comfortable in his seat.

“Perhaps that’s all Rey knows them as,” Obi-Wan agreed quietly as he watched the healer leave the imaging room.

She slipped through the doorway, giving both Obi-Wan and Rex a smile. “I assume the questions you’ll be asking are classified.”

“They are, yes.” Obi-Wan nodded kindly at her.

The healer hummed as she started up the imaging machine. “You are more than welcome to run this then. It really isn’t too difficult.” She gestured to the controls. “Most of it will be automated. It’ll focus on the brain activity automatically for you. All you have to do is take a snapshot of the image you want.” She pointed at the large blue button near Obi-Wan’s hand. “That button there.”

“Alright.”

“Call me when you are all finished and I can shut it down safely.” She turned to leave the room. “I’ll just be outside in the hallway.”

The door clicked shut behind her as she left the room. Leaving Obi-Wan and Rex alone.

He carefully slid a datacard into the computer in front of him, making certain it was recording both the images he’d be taking along with a video of the questions he would be asking. Anakin needed to know what was asked; he needed to see how his Padawan reacted.

Obi-Wan pressed down on the button activating the microphone. “Alright Rey… I have a list of questions that Anakin wanted me to ask you. We will start off with baseline questions to get a proper reading before we move onto the other ones.”

“Okay,” she replied after a moment. She was clasping her hands together tightly across her stomach. Trying desperately to stave off the cold.
“I will be taking snapshots of your brain activity often,” he reminded her. “Be careful to keep your eyes closed.”

She nodded at him. “Understood,” she sighed, closing her eyes tightly.

Obi-Wan cleared his throat. He pressed down on the microphone button once again. “What is your name?”

“My name is Rey.”

He and Rex watched as the image of her brain on the screen before them lit up.

Obi-Wan took a picture. A flash was seen through the observation window.

“How are you from?”

The imaging machine adjusted slightly. “I’m from Jakku. It’s located in the Western Reaches of the Inner Rim.”

Another flash.

“How old are you?” He asked Rey kindly.

“Um… I’m twenty one, I think,” she replied. “Give or take a couple of months.”

Flash.

“What can you tell me about your parents?” Obi-Wan peered down at the datapad in front of him. “What do they look like?”

Both he and Rex waited as Rey thought of her response. Watching the monitor closely. The colours
lighting up specific sections of her brain.

“I remember my mother had long hair,” Rey began quietly. “It was brown, I think. She used to let me brush it in the morning sometimes.” A pause. “She was very thin. Skinny. Had calluses on her hands.”

Obi-Wan watched the monitor intently as she spoke about her mother. He took a couple more snapshots — he really didn’t have any idea what it was he was looking for.

“What about your father?” He prompted her. “What did he look like?”

Out of the corner of his eye he watched Rex lean closer to the screen, trying to get a better look.

He saw Rey frown at the question.


Flash.

“His boots were black too,” Rey continued, concentrating hard. “Like Finn’s. The same.”

The Force prickled slightly up Obi-Wan’s neck. He took another snapshot.

“Who’s —”

Obi-Wan held up a hand, cutting Rex’s question off. “When you say the same as Finn’s boots, do you mean they were identical, or just similar black boots?”

Rey frowned. “They were older.” Quiet. Barely above a whisper. A single tear slid out of the corner of her eye.
Obi-Wan could feel her fear begin to hum around the room. Her dread. He took a couple more images of her brain.

“Can we talk about something else?” Rey asked quietly. “I don’t want to talk about my parents right now.” She tugged her emotions back under her shields.

“Rey,” Obi-Wan sighed. “I know this is uncomfortable for you, but we need to ask the difficult questions.”

He watched as Rey sniffed, wiping at her eyes. “Alright,” she murmured after a few moments.

“Do you remember what happened when your parents flew away in their ship when you were six?” Obi-Wan winced at Anakin’s questions. They were extremely personal.

“What do you mean?”

Obi-Wan frowned. “Do you remember the reason why they left you there?” He asked her gently. “How about we start there?”

He watched as Rey frowned. Thinking hard about her past. She shook her head slightly. “I don’t know. I don’t remember a reason.” She sighed. “I remember my mother telling me that they’d come back for me… but I don’t know why they left. I don’t even know if what I remember is true, or just something I made up in my head to get me through the days.”

“What did she say to you?” Obi-Wan prompted. “What do you remember her saying?”

“I’ll come back for you sweetheart. I promise,” Rey whispered. She bit her bottom lip hard. Hanging on tightly to her emotions.

Obi-Wan took a couple more images of her brain as he waited for her to gather herself. He cleared his throat. “And it was your mother who said that?”

“I think so. I assumed so.” She scratched her elbow. “But… the more I think about it, the less sure I am.” She sniffed. “Maybe I just imagined it.” A quiet acceptance.
“Perhaps,” Obi-Wan conceded. “Or perhaps your memory is true. It was from a long time ago.”

Rey nodded sadly.

“What else can you tell me about that time?” He prodded her gently.

“I remember,” she cleared her throat. “I remember their ship flying away. I remember Unkar Plutt telling me to quiet down as I watched them leave. I was screaming for them to come back.” Her voice was strained. Emotions humming strongly. Loneliness. Hurt. Betrayal.

“Do you remember the type of ship at all?” He tried to move the conversation along.

Rey shook her head. “No. An old clunker.” She shrugged. “Other than that, I’m not sure. I didn’t start really learning about starships until a little while later. When I started scavenging for scraps for Plutt.”

Obi-Wan pinched the bridge of his nose. Deep in thought. “You mentioned the research base to both myself and Anakin. What can you tell me about it?”

He knew they had already gone over what she had heard and experienced, but she hadn’t been in the imaging machine at the time. He was hoping both he and Rex would be able to see something out of the ordinary in her brain.

“There were rumours for as long as I can remember of a secret Imperial research base up at Carbon Ridge,” Rey began. “There was always talk of dead-enders that remained guarding the facility. Usually from the older scavengers. Anyway, when I was about sixteen, Plutt and a few of his crew decided it was a good idea to scavenge what was left of the base. I mean — from a scavenging point of view, whatever was up there would’ve been worth the travel time.” She paused, gathering her thoughts. “Plutt and his crew left. A day or so later he returned with part of his crew missing and some old stormtrooper armour. He and the others were spooked. Shaken up.” She shook her head. “No one went up there after that. Ever. The risk was far too great. We all stuck to the crashed Destroyers and other junk nearby.”

“What’re dead-enders?” Rex questioned.
“The bearded men that guarded the supposed base who were considered crazy by everyone else on Jakku,” Rey explained. “They would chase people away from Carbon Ridge with rocks and stuff; throw things at trespassers.” A pause. “I remember someone saying that the dead-enders wore Imperial armour.”

Obi-Wan shared a look with Rex who raised an eyebrow in thought.

“Have we thought to carry out a mission at the base?” The soldier asked him quietly.

He nodded. “Anakin wanted to the first time we met up with him. Had to talk him down for the time being. It’s not the right time.” He sighed. “I think as soon as he’s out of his suit he’ll push for that.”

“I do have a beard,” Rex reminded him dryly. “Could fit right in with the crazies.”

Obi-Wan allowed himself a small grin. “When the time comes, I’m sure we can find some use for you.” He sighed. “Have you spotted anything?” He snapped another couple images as he asked Rex his thoughts.

The soldier grimaced, shaking his head. “Nothing that jumped out at me, but I’m no healer. You’ll have to ask her when she comes back in.”

Obi-Wan hummed. “Rey did mention to Anakin that she was born ten years after the fall of the Empire. As she was ranting to him she mentioned that if there had been anything like the inhibitor chips done to her, Palpatine would’ve had decades to improve them from what he had the Kaminoans put in you and your brothers.”

“Now there’s a terrifying thought,” Rex muttered as he made his way towards the doorway to allow the healer to return to the observation room.

“We’re all done here for now Rey,” Obi-Wan stated over the microphone. “We would like the healer to come in and have a look at the images for a moment or two to see if she can spot anything out of the ordinary.”

Rey nodded. “Alright.” She sighed, opening her eyes hesitantly.
Obi-Wan quickly ejected the datacard recording the interview from the computer and slipped it into his datapad to give to Anakin. The healer would get the original file to go over, Anakin the copied file.

“Everything is finished?” the healer asked pleasantly as she took the seat next to Obi-Wan.

“It is.”

She began pulling up the images he had taken of Rey’s brain. “What exactly am I searching for here? We already know that she doesn't have an inhibitor chip from the Clone Wars.” She looked at Rex sadly.

“Anything out of the ordinary.” Obi-Wan told her. “Anything.”

He waited as she carefully inspected each and every image. Occasionally sharing a look with Rex when she hummed thoughtfully.

“I see nothing.” The healer told the two of them after some time. “She fits the parameters of every other human being. Nothing is out of place; nothing extra is present in her brain.” She looked at Obi-Wan, shaking her head. “She doesn’t have anything out of the ordinary. Honest to goodness. She is a healthy young woman.”

Obi-Wan sighed. Disappointed, but also relieved.

“Why do you think she has a chip? Did something happen?” The healer’s curiosity was humming strongly around the room.

“She believes she does,” Rex answered her. “Had a bad dream.”

“And we figured if Palpatine could hide them in clones almost thirty years ago without anyone noticing until it was too late, then perhaps he has been able to update the technology in that time.” Obi-Wan shook his head. “I’ll let her know. We can meditate together; try to figure something else out.”
“I can keep looking if you like,” the healer offered to Obi-Wan as he made his way towards the doorway leading into the imaging room. “I can look at comparables just to be sure.”

He nodded as he reached the door. “Thank you.” He gave her a friendly, but tired smile as he made his way out of the room.

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“So what does that mean?” Rey asked him quietly. Concern evident on her face.

Obi-Wan rubbed his beard as the two of them took a seat facing each other just outside the base. “It doesn’t mean anything. Not really.” He gave her a friendly, comforting smile. “We keep searching. We keep thinking of new ways to try to figure out what is going on with you.” He sighed. “If there is anything going on with you.” A pause. “Perhaps it’s not an inhibitor chip at all,” he suggested to her quietly.

“What do you mean?”

“Anakin found out some information about Carbon Ridge. About the Research Base there.” He waited until Rey looked at him before continuing. “He found out that there is evidence that the research there apparently includes genetic engineering. I think that it may tie in with you… in some way.”

“You think I’m created by the Empire.” Rey’s fear pulsated against his shields.

He shook his head. “No.” He looked at Rey closely. “I think you are a product of a mother and a father, who just happens to be Force sensitive. I do however think your Force sensitivity may have been manipulated by the Empire. Your midichlorian levels, that is.” He frowned. “I think it is too much of a coincidence that such a base was present on Jakku of all places along with you.” He gave Rey a kind, understanding smile. “You are exceptionally strong in the Force, Rey. Unnaturally strong.”

“I’m a freak, is what you’re saying.” Rey crossed her arms across her chest. Her eyes shining with unshed tears.
“I never said that.” He shook his head adamantly. “Not once. You are special. But… you have to understand what myself and Anakin are seeing. You do, don’t you?”

“That given the fact that my mother and father left me on Jakku, and the fact that I am exceptionally strong in the Force, the both of you believe that I am a product of some secret experiment that Palpatine ordered to be carried out without anyone but a select few knowing.” Rey glared at the ground in front of her.

Her expression turned sad. Afraid. “My father…” she left her statement unfinished.

“He was a stormtrooper most likely,” Obi-Wan agreed quietly. “Someone guarding the base during operations.” He sighed. “That doesn’t make you a bad person, Rey. You must remember that, alright?”

“My mother and father experimented on me.” Quiet. Barely above a whisper. Understanding was humming strongly around the two of them. “What kind of parents would do that to their own child?” She glared at Obi-Wan. Her lip quivering. “Who would do such a thing?”

“Someone desperate,” he supplied quietly. “It took them at least ten years after the fall of the Empire to do whatever they did. They were desperate.”

Silence as Rey digested the information.

“They sold me.”

Obi-Wan nodded sadly. “Never said they were good people. What they did to you was wrong. Whatever reason they used to justify their actions, they were wrong.”

“How would they adjust my midichlorian counts?” She asked him quietly.

“I have no idea,” Obi-Wan shrugged. “Obviously they must figure out a way to isolate midichlorians somehow. Figure out a way to slip them into your genetic makeup, without your body rejecting them.” He shook his head. “Theoretically, that’s what I would say was done. Whether that actually happened in reality is another question altogether.”
“And is the… man’s voice a side effect of that?” She peered at Obi-Wan worriedly. “That manipulation of my midichlorians?”

“Perhaps,” Obi-Wan conceded. “I don’t really know.”

Obi-Wan watched as Rey ran her fingers through the grass the pair of them were sitting on. Watching as she tried to come to terms with everything.

“You seem to be taking it alright?”

Rey grimaced. “I think I already knew… Master Anakin has been telling me for months. I just haven’t been listening. I refused to listen to him.” A pause. “I realized he was telling the truth when you got me to describe my father. His boots.”

Sad eyes peered at Obi-Wan. Devastated eyes.

It was bothering her more than she was willing to admit out loud. He needed to watch her closely. Needed to make sure she would be okay.

“We will continue to think up new ideas as to why you are hearing that voice in your head, Rey,” Obi-Wan assured her quietly. “We just need time to think of something else. That doesn’t mean this examination was a failure. We found out some things that will be able to help us.”

She nodded curtly. Refusing to meet his eyes. Barely holding on.

Obi-Wan frowned. “Did you want to meditate?”

“Please.”

He reached out his hands, waiting for Rey to place her hands in his.

“Just try to relax if you can.”
Rey wiped at her cheek, nodding, before placing both her hands in his.

“Exhale.”

Together the two of them slowly exhaled together. Watching each other closely before gently closing their eyes at identical times.

Obi-Wan began reaching out towards Rey in the Force. Guiding her and encouraging her to open up.

Slowly both he and Rey began to enter the realm of meditation. Rivers and streams flowing all around the pair of them as they slipped deeper and deeper into themselves.

A gentle squeeze of his hands brought his attention towards the young Padawan in front of him.

He blinked his eyes at Rey sitting cross-legged in front of him. Her hair and wraps were blowing from some unfelt breeze. She reached out a hand to him as she stood up from her perch on the ground.

Her face sad. Troubled.

“Wanna take a walk with me Obi-Wan?” she asked him quietly.

“Of course.” He allowed her to help him to his feet. He’d go where she wanted to during this meditation session; explore what she wanted to. It was entirely her decision this time around.

Together they walked in silence. Occasionally stopping to get a feel for the nearby creatures, before continuing on.

He held onto her hand tightly as she maneuvered around some unseen edge. Near the river he could see some ways away.
“Are we walking along the shore?” He asked her inquisitively. “To the lake or ocean that you see?”

Rey nodded. “I’m barely getting my feet wet.” She looked up at him, a questioning look in her eyes. “You can’t see it at all?”

He focused on the ground beneath his feet. Shaking his head. “No, I cannot. Just the river down over there.” He gestured in its general direction.

Her shock hummed gently around the two of them before she tucked it away. “But… it’s so far away.” Her voice was sad. “You’re missing out on so much.”

He gave her a kind smile, but didn’t respond. He’d wait until she was ready to talk.

A few more minutes of silence as the pair of them continued along the shore.

Rey sighed.

Obi-Wan quirked an eyebrow in wait.

“I’m upset,” she admitted quietly.

He nodded. “It is understandable.”

“I’ve spent my whole life — as long as I can remember, at least — trying my hardest to be good. To be perfect.” She sniffed. “I thought if I could be good, that maybe my mum and dad would come back for me. Just like they promised they would. That I must’ve done something wrong for them to leave me there. For them to leave me on Jakku. Alone. That they left me there because I was bad and they were good.” A huff as she wiped both her cheeks. “They left me with Unkar Plutt.” She shuddered violently. “He made me feel so… dirty. Used and unimportant.”

“My mother and father were really bad, weren’t they?” She questioned Obi-Wan quietly. “They were really bad people. Supported Palpatine. He trusted them with his secret.” A sniff. “They can’t have been good.”
“It doesn’t mean you are bad.” Obi-Wan needed to make sure she knew that. That the actions of her parents did not determine the kind of person she was deep down inside.

“What is bad, really?” Rey questioned quietly. “Who determines what is good and what is bad? It all depends on your point of view, doesn’t it?”

Obi-Wan frowned. She had a point.

“I have anger issues that I continually have to keep in check,” Rey stated tiredly. “My parents were supporters of a Sith Lord and his tyrannical Empire.” A pause. “But, at the same time, I’m trying really hard to become a Jedi. To be good. To find my place. To do good with everything.” She shrugged. “I don’t know anymore. I’m scared.”

“That’s a normal reaction, Rey.” He squeezed her hand. “All of us have light and dark inside of us. Your life on Jakku most definitely affects you so. As it would anyone. It’s not something you should be afraid of.” He held up his free hand to stop her from interrupting him. “Cautious of, yes. But not afraid.”

Obi-Wan let her digest what he was saying to her. What he was telling her.

She frowned slightly. “You mentioned earlier that I am special, but that isn’t something I know or understand. I am just Rey. No one more than that.” She pleaded with him quietly. “I don’t want to be anyone more than that. Not anymore. I just want to be Rey of Jakku.”

“Okay.” He nodded at her. “Just Rey.”

She wiped underneath her nose with her wrap. “I’m not anyone’s saviour. I’m not the chosen one. Nothing.”

He nodded once again. “Just Rey.”

“It’s a lot of pressure to put on someone, you know.” She looked at him with an eyebrow raised.
Obi-Wan looked down at his feet in understanding. “Too much pressure. Far too much.” He met her eyes once more. “I apologize.”

She gave him a sad smile. “I forgive you.”

They continued to walk.

“You know…” Rey came to an abrupt stop. “Palpatine has my blood sample.” She looked at him with concern. “When I was talking with Ahsoka on the way to D’Qar, she mentioned that if my mother and father were scavengers like I believed them to be, that Palpatine wouldn’t be any wiser as to who I am. But, now that it’s likely my father is a stormtrooper…” She left the rest hanging.

“I don’t think he’d keep a record of stormtrooper blood on file to compare it to, Rey.” Obi-Wan reassured her. “I can assure you, troopers are seen as replaceable. As unimportant. Regardless of where they’re stationed.” A pause. “They always have been.”

“What about my mother?”

Obi-Wan had no answer for her. *What about her mother, indeed.*

“He hasn’t done anything yet.” He tried to continue to reassure her. “That being said… the bastard is exceptionally patient.”

Rey nodded in understanding. “No point in stressing out about it.”

“Indeed.”

~ | ~

Rey glared at the punching bag in front of her as she beat it with her fists. Again and again and again.

Harder and harder.
She couldn’t sleep.

Afraid to remember something else about her childhood.

Something she had spent years trying to forget.

She hopped on her feet a bit as she took a deep breath before hunkering down once more. Trying desperately to work herself into exhaustion.

Making certain she wouldn’t have the energy to dream.

“How do you always beat the shit out of the punching bag in the middle of the night?” An amused male voice asked from behind her.

Rey spun around towards the voice, raising an eyebrow at the man standing in the doorway of the training facility.

Kes Dameron was smirking at her with his own eyebrow raised and his arms crossed.

“Only when I can’t sleep,” Rey quipped dryly. “Or don’t want to,” she added as an afterthought. She nodded in his direction. “Do you always hide in the entryway watching people beat the shit out of the punching bag?”

Kes let out a bark of laughter. A large grin erupted on his face that didn’t quite reach his eyes.

He was worried about something.

He shook his head at Rey’s question. “Only when I can’t sleep.” He stepped further into the room, looking around as if determining whether he could trust Rey or not. “Have a lot on my mind,” he admitted quietly.
Rey nodded slowly. She could sense his fear humming around the room. The man was terrified of something. Overwhelmed.

But, excited as well.

She reached out a hand, smirking as her water canteen flew into her palm from the other side of the room. “Do you want to talk about it?” She really didn’t know what she was supposed to do or say in these types of situations.

She took a long drink of her water, waiting for Kes to reply.

Rey went through the events of her past in her head, trying to pinpoint what it was that had Kes so afraid.

She was aware that he was married to Shara Bey — one of the Rebellion’s fighter pilots. One of the best that they had to offer.

Rey blinked. *Dameron.*

Of course.

Poe.

Kes’ fear and excitement were beginning to make sense.

Now was not the time to start a family. It was a time of war. It would be for at least a few more years.

Kes sighed, rubbing his face. He cleared his throat. “Just have some personal stuff going on, that’s all. Unplanned and unexpected. But… good, I think.” He gave her a shaky grin.

Rey nodded in understanding. “I’ll leave you to it, I guess.” She informed him quietly as she clutched her canteen tightly. “I should try to get some rest for a few hours at least.”
“Of course.”

Rey made her way towards the exit before stopping. Her back facing Kes who was now beginning to set up on some of the weightlifting benches. She hesitated for only a moment before voicing her thoughts. “If it is any consolation, I have a feeling he will take after his mother.” She turned slightly, taking in his shocked expression. “That he’ll be a pilot like her.”

“He?” Wonder hummed strongly around the room. Pulsing hard against Rey’s shields.

Rey nodded. “He.” She sighed. “Have a good night Dameron.”
Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

Okie dokies... we’ve reached the midpoint of the story with this chapter, I think.
Time to buckle in.
Enjoy ❤️❤️

Vader sat in his hyperbaric chamber, sipping on his nutrient water. Trying desperately to have some peace and quiet.

The officers, captains, and admirals aboard the Executor had a difficult time making decisions without checking in with him first. Regardless of how menial the task might be.

It was as annoying as it was frustrating. Incompetence from the people around him was never something he enjoyed experiencing.

He sighed quietly, shaking his head.

An alert sounded from his datapad. Obi-Wan had finally found the time to inform him what they had found out about Rey. About his Padawan. About his… bonded.

He swallowed. Uneasy about what he was feeling about the young woman.

Vader clicked open the message, ignoring his wayward thoughts.

I’ve sent the file of the video recording. It should be included at the bottom of this message. The images of Rey’s brain scans are included there as well.
Spent the rest of the day meditating with Rey. Needed to help her work through what she found out about herself.

Does not appear to have an inhibitor chip implanted in her brain. Rex and the healer both went over each image. Rex sat through the interview process as well. There is nothing out of place. There is nothing out of the ordinary.

There doesn’t appear to be anything wrong with her.

Would like to hear your thoughts after you watch the video.

File: VideoInterview - 27 minutes
File: BrainScans - 29 images

He clicked the video file open, unease pooling in his gut.

Something must be wrong if Obi-Wan wished to talk later on.

Rey popped up on the screen. She was lying down on a medical stretcher. Shivering slightly from the cold.

“All right Rey,” Obi-Wan’s voice sounded over the intercom. “I have a list of questions that Anakin wanted me to ask you. We will start off with baseline questions to get a proper reading, before we move onto the other ones.”

“Okay,” she replied quietly. Worry etched onto her face.

Obi-Wan informed her that he’d be taking images of her brain often, suggesting that she keep her eyes closed.

Vader watched as Rey gave a curt nod of her head before closing her eyes tightly.
“What is your name?”

“My name is Rey,” his Padawan replied. Truth rang strongly in her statement.

He blinked as the screen flashed. Obi-Wan had taken a snapshot of Rey’s brain.

“Where are you from?” The Jedi Knight asked Rey.

“I’m from Jakku. It’s located in the Western Reaches of the Inner Rim.” Once again, the truth rang strongly in her statement.

Vader allowed himself a small amount of relief. Rey may not know who her parents were, but she knew who she was and where she came from. That was most important.

“How old are you?” asked Obi-Wan.

He took another sip of his nutrient water.

“Um… twenty one, I think. Give or take a couple of months.” Rey frowned slightly. Uncertainty hummed faintly from her.

Vader nodded to himself. Her age would be something difficult to keep track of on a place like Jakku. Time spent with the Rebels certainly didn’t help either. Her uncertainty made sense.

“What can you tell me about your parents?” Obi-Wan asked Rey clearly. “What do they look like?”

Now they were hopefully going to find some answers. Vader leaned forward slightly in his seat in anticipation of Rey’s response.

“I remember my mother had long hair.” Rey’s answer was quiet as she thought of her mother. “It was brown, I think. She used to let me brush it in the morning sometimes.” A slight pause. “She was very thin. Skinny. Had calluses on her hands.”
Vader closed his eyes. He could feel her sadness. Her grief. Even now, after the fact.

“What about your father?” Obi-Wan prompted her. Trying to keep the conversation going. “What did he look like?”

“I don’t really remember him well.” A quiet admittance. He opened his eyes once again to watch Rey as she spoke. “I remember black clothes. They smelled bad. Soiled. Rotten.”

He frowned at her statement. What kind of desert dweller would wear black? It was foolish. Stupid. An almost certain death in the heat of the sun.

“His boots were black, too. Like Finn’s. The same.”

What?

Vader hit the pause button.

He blinked a couple of times, remembering Rey’s words as she spoke of her friend Finn. The defected stormtrooper.

“Fuck,” he muttered quietly to himself. His thoughts whirring. “Fuck me.” Her father likely was a stormtrooper. Much like her friend Finn was. But… was he a deserter like Finn was as well? Or was he merely carrying out a long term assignment? A long term, undercover assignment.

Vader frowned. The fool was wearing all black on a desert planet. He wasn’t afraid of the remnants of the Empire searching for him. He wasn’t afraid of anyone searching for him.

The man — whoever he was — hadn’t deserted his post. He hadn’t even attempted to hide. He didn’t need to — he was on karking Jakku of all places. The forgotten location of the final battle. The world that was very much ignored by the New Republic.

He rubbed his face with a gloved hand. Feeling like a shit.
He hit the play button once again. Now dreading what he’d hear about his Padawan.

“Who’s —”

Rex’s voice was cut off abruptly.

“When you say the same as Finn’s boots: do you mean they were identical, or just similar boots?”

Obi-Wan had caught it as well.

“They were older.”

Vader watched as Rey began to understand the gravity of the situation. He watched as a single tear slipped down the side of her face.

“Can we talk about something else?” Rey pleaded with Obi-Wan in the observation room next door to her. “I don’t want to talk about my parents right now.” A pained, worried expression on her face. There for him to see.

Her heart was breaking. Whatever story she had told herself as a young girl about her mother and father was now beginning to unravel.

“Rey, I know this is uncomfortable for you, but we need to ask the difficult questions.” Obi-Wan was using his soothing, Jedi Master voice. The voice he used on younglings and Anakin when he was a small boy, missing his mother.

Vader closed his eyes, tucking away his memories. It was not the time or place.

“Do you remember what happened when your parents flew away in their ship when you were six?” The Jedi Knight gently plowed on with what needed to be addressed.
Vader cleared his throat before taking a sip of his water.

“Do you remember the reason why they left you there? How about we start with that?”

He winced at his questions. He really needed to learn how to be more subtle. His interrogation practices with enemies of the Empire was evident for all to hear. He needed to relearn to be gentle. Respectful.

“I don’t know,” Rey whispered. “I don’t remember a reason.” A moment or two of silence as she thought of her answer. Vader waited patiently. “I remember my mother telling me that they’d come back for me. But, I don’t know why they left.” She frowned. “I don’t even know if what I remember is true, or just something I made up in my head to get me through the days.”

“What did she say to you?” Obi-Wan questioned over the intercom. “What do you remember her saying?”

Vader held his breath. Waiting.

“I’ll come back for you, sweetheart. I promise,” Rey whispered her reply.

He watched as her bottom lip wobbled with emotion before she bit down on it hard. Trying to hide her pain. Trying to hide her hurt. Her betrayal.

“Please don’t hide Rey,” Vader muttered quietly. “Please don’t think you need to hide from me.”

He watched with sadness as Obi-Wan continued to ask Rey questions about her past. No longer wanting to know what she said.

He just wanted to be with Rey; next to her. Making certain she was alright. That she knew she was cared for.

“You mentioned the research base to both myself and Anakin. What can you tell me about it?” Obi-Wan was smart. This topic had upset her earlier.
“There were rumours for as long as I can remember of a secret Imperial research base up at Carbon Ridge.” Rey’s voice was strong once again. Focused on her task. “There was always talk of dead-enders that remained guarding the facility. Usually from the older scavengers,” she explained. “Anyway, when I was about sixteen, Plutt and a few of his crew decided it was a good idea to scavenge what was left of the base. I mean from a scavenging point of view, whatever was up there would’ve been worth the travel time.”

Vader nodded in understanding. Food and water would’ve been scarce from time to time — even for Plutt. He would’ve needed to trade something substantial to a supply ship if the moisture farmers in the nearby villages were unable to obtain enough water for the people living on Jakku.

“Plutt and his crew left. A day or so later he returned with part of his crew missing and some old stormtrooper armour. He and the others were spooked. Shaken up. No one went up there after that. Ever. The risk was far too great. We all stuck to the crashed Destroyers and other junk nearby.”

He still believed that a Sith holocron was responsible for the fear Plutt experienced. Sidious must have found a holocron somewhere that aided in whatever it was that he had Rey’s parents taking part in. Their research. The genetic engineering.

“What’re dead-enders?” Rex voiced after a moment.

Vader frowned. It was a good question.

“The bearded men that guarded the supposed base who were considered crazy by everyone else on Jakku,” Rey answered him, matter-of-factly. “They would chase people away from Carbon Ridge with rocks and stuff. Throw things at trespassers.” A pause. “I remember someone saying that the dead-enders wore Imperial armour.”

A bit odd, Vader thought to himself. Why would Imperial soldiers guard a long-abandoned base?

It was something the New Republic should have picked up on. They should’ve noticed soldiers guarding the base decades after the supposed fall of the Empire.

Incompetence. That’s what it all boiled down to.
It would be the death of him.

He sighed quietly as the video came to an end. He’d look at the images at a later time.

Right now he needed to get in touch with Obi-Wan.

He opened up a new document and began typing his message to him.

*Just finished watching the video.*

*Are you certain Rey is alright?*

He waited for his old friend’s response. His leg jiggling impatiently.

An alert sounded in his hyperbaric chamber. Someone on the bridge wanted to speak with him.

“For fuck’s sake,” he swore under his breath. Slapping the button to allow the call to go through.

Admiral Piett stared back at him, no doubt shocked that Vader would choose to speak to him without his helmet on.

“What?” He didn’t have time for this shit. *Karking koochoo.*

He began the procedures to bring his helmet back around his head.

“Lord Vader, sir,” Piett began pompously, trying desperately not to stare at his superior. “We have been called back to Coruscant to meet with the Emperor. He has called back the majority of the squadron.”

Vader waited until his helmet finished sealing before replying. “Did the Emperor say why?” His vocoder rang strong.
The admiral shook his head. “No, my Lord. It is likely just to touch base with the squadron. He has been calling these meetings for well over a year. We were due for another.”

Another thing he had no idea about when he was aboard the Devastator.

“Change course for Coruscant,” he ordered the bridge. “Double time. We don’t want to keep the Emperor waiting. He would be most displeased.”

Perhaps when they reached the capital he’d be able to speak privately with Montferrat. Check in with how he was doing. How his former soldiers were doing.

Limiting their communication to only the official channels had put a hamper on what they could speak to one another about.

There was always a risk of someone listening in. Always.

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Vader remained kneeling on the hard floor of the throne room as Sidious questioned each commander of their current responsibilities.

A task, no doubt, to check in with the squadron to make certain his apprentice was doing his job appropriately.

“Commander Montferrat,” the Emperor hissed at Vader’s former second-in-command. “Do inform us what you have been up to.”

He could feel the Sith Lord’s oily smile without having to look up at the manipulative prick.

Montferrat cleared his throat quietly. “My Lord, we have come directly from Jedha after hearing hints of a possible rebellion gathering on the moon.” A slight pause as he quickly organized his thoughts. “Word had reached my Admiral’s contact that there has been recruitment rallies there in
the past. We were hoping to catch the rebel scum off guard.” A quick breath in. “It appears, however, that we just missed the latest recruiting drive. I have left a half dozen undercover troopers there to find out when the next rally will be held. I hope to hear from them shortly.” He sighed. His nervousness was humming faintly around Vader, but was otherwise holding his own. “We have also deployed a number of probe droids within the quadrant that we are responsible for patrolling. As of yet, we haven’t found anything worthwhile.”

“I will be made aware the moment you hear from Jedha.” An order. The Emperor was pleased.

“Of course, my Lord.” Montferrat gave Sidious a curt nod of his head and stepped back into place next to Commander Tagge.

“Lord Vader and I have some things to discuss in private,” the Emperor addressed the half dozen commanders in the room. “The rest of you are free to leave.”

Vader felt a slight prickle running up his neck. The Force was warning him to be careful. Cautious.

It made him uneasy.

He kept his head bowed, listening to the other commanders leave the throne room.

He could hear Sidious breathing. Quiet raspy breaths as the pair of them waited for the room to empty out.

The doorway clamped shut.

“You may look at me, my apprentice.”

Vader raised his head slightly to look up at his Master in perfect submission.

Sidious’ hands were steepled in front of his face as he rested his elbows on the armrests of his throne. He was watching Vader closely.
“I am pleased with the coordination of your squadron,” Sidious began quietly. “Continue to focus on searching for the rebel terrorists — they cannot stay hidden for much longer.” A sick, greasy grin split his face. Showing his rotten teeth.

Vader held back his shudder, willing himself to remain as still as possible. “Yes, my Master.”

“The first stage of construction is complete for the Death Star.” He paused at Vader’s surprise. “Yes, Lord Vader, we are building another, stronger weapon to wipe out anyone who opposes the Galactic Empire.”

Vader hadn’t expected to be told of the weapon until much later — if at all. He hesitated for only a moment. “I trust the flaws of the first will be addressed?” It was inevitable, but it didn’t hurt to double check.

Sidious hummed. “Of course. Failure once more would be most embarrassing. It is not something I will accept. I will not be made a fool by the rebel scum, Jedi or otherwise.”

His hatred plummeted Vader’s shields for a few moments until he began to slowly reign himself in.

A moment or two of silence.

Sidious sighed before continuing. “We are currently moving the structure to a secondary location. It is the reason why only a handful of your squadron have made it here today. They’ve other, more pressing responsibilities.”

Vader kept his mind as blank as possible. He’d worry about who was in charge of the second superweapon once he got the hell off this planet. “I understand, my Master.”

“Good.” Another slick grin.

Another repressed shudder.

“I’m pleased we could speak in person.” Sidious quirked his head slightly. Grin still evident on his
face. “It reminds me of… old times.” A short pause. “When you were just a boy.”

Vader’s blood ran cold. What the hell was he playing at?

Did he know he was leaning more towards the light? Had he not been harsh enough on the soldiers aboard the Executor?

He had already executed three officers for insubordination. Had demonstrated to the majority of the crew in person what would happen to anyone who dared to question his authority.

He regularly reminded Piett of his place with a well-placed Force choke. Holding on a few seconds longer each time. Making certain Piett understood the implications.

Vader was judge, jury, and executioner. His word was law aboard the Dreadnought.

“My Master?” He questioned. His uncertainty rang strong. His confusion. He didn’t know what to ask. Didn’t know what to say.

The smile slowly grew on Palpatine’s face. “You may leave now, Lord Vader. I’m certain Commander Montferrat is waiting patiently to speak with you in private.”

He gestured vaguely towards the exit, allowing the large doors to open once more.

“Yes Master.” Vader cautiously stood up from his kneeling position on the floor, thighs protesting.

He blinked twice, confused at what had just happened before spinning around and leaving the throne room and the Imperial Palace. Cape billowing behind him.

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Vader made his way towards his quarters aboard the Executor. His Admiral had just informed him upon arriving that Montferrat was waiting for him inside. He had come directly here after the meeting with the Emperor.
He obviously wanted — needed — to speak with him. Something must have happened on Jedha. Something he had left out from his report to the Emperor.

Vader waved the door open, spotting Jhared sitting patiently at the conference table pushed off to the side of the room.

He waved the doors shut before speaking. “Sidious knows you are here.”

“I assumed he’d know.” Montferrat nodded. “It would be odd if we didn’t catch up in person after working together for so many years, would it not?”

Vader gave him a half shrug as he sat down heavily on an unoccupied chair. “Perhaps.” He hadn’t thought of something that simple. That unthreatening.

He took a sip of his nutrient water. “Jedha,” he prompted after swallowing. “What really happened?”

“We arrived just as the gathering was finishing up. I ordered my soldiers to warn the rebels there to flee. That it wasn’t safe for them to carry out recruitment drives there any longer.” He rubbed his face. “I did actually leave behind a handful of troopers undercover, just in case. To keep watch and to make certain the rebels got out of there like they were ordered to. To aid them if necessary.”

“A lie of omission is much easier to hide than a lie of facts.” Vader muttered more to himself.

“It is.” Jhared sighed. “It’s how I lasted this long with you. You rarely asked the right questions.”

Vader couldn’t help but smirk. “Prick.”

“I don’t know how much longer I can keep lying to the Emperor though,” the commander continued, ignoring Vader’s insult. “He’d eventually figure something was odd, if he hasn’t already. My soldiers and I are sitting ducks if he decided to take us out. We are only one ship, regardless of how customized the Devastator is.”
Vader nodded. Jhared didn’t have the Force to protect himself from Palpatine. He was exceptionally vulnerable to an attack or assassination attempt by a bounty hunter. Imperial or otherwise.

“I may be able to take care of that.” A rough idea was forming in his head. A ridiculous idea, but an idea nevertheless. “I will need some help though.”

“What do you need?”

“How quickly can you get rid of the trackers aboard your Destroyer?”

~ | ~

Vader made his way into his home on Coruscant. Tired after spending the rest of the day planning with Montferrat and filling Piett in on what was said in the meeting with the Emperor. He had ordered SD-2826 to leave with Montferrat. The droid had seen and heard far too much.

He also had a soft spot for her. They’d been through a lot together. He wasn’t about to leave her behind.

This was where he needed to be to put his plan into action.

He needed to kill a bit more time until Montferrat was ready.

He made his way through the apartment, towards the balcony overlooking the skyscrapers of Coruscant. The Imperial Palace could be seen off in the distance. Vader ignored the newly installed video camera placed inside one of the ventilation ducts.

It had been there for a few months. At least. Recording and watching his every move. Waiting for him to make a mistake.

Waiting for him to reveal his secret.
He grinned as he stopped just before reaching the balcony and stood in the doorway, leaning up against the side of the wall.

He would be revealing it all tonight to Sidious. He wanted the manipulative prick terrified.

He wanted to feel Palpatine’s fear pummeling against his shields all the way from the throne room.

Vader waited for a few minutes in silence. He knew he’d be seeing Rey tonight. It had been a couple of days without contact.

They were due for a visit.

As if on cue, his ears became muffled. He slowly turned to face the inside of the apartment and the hidden camera. Waiting for his bonded to appear before him.

Waiting for Rey.

She appeared dressed in her mechanic overalls crouching down on the floor, reaching out for something.

“You know you can just use the Force to bring whatever closer to you,” he said to her in greeting.

Rey shot up to her feet, turning around to face him. A grin plastered on her face. “Master Anakin!” She winced at her volume, taking a quick look around before making her way closer.

Vader held his arms open for her to step into. “Are you alright?” He let his concern hum around the two of them.

Rey shook her head. “No, not really.” She stepped into his arms, wrapping her own around his torso before tucking her head against his shoulder. “I think I knew deep down… I just didn’t want to admit it.” She sniffed. “I’m sorry I doubted you.”

Vader held her close and began gently running his gloved hand through her hair. He was watching
the hidden camera as he spoke. “I’m sorry. You’ve nothing to apologize for.”

A little nod of her head against his shoulder.

It was now or never.

Vader concentrated, focusing on their bond. *I need you to trust me right now. Can you do that for me Rey?*

She pulled back slightly, a worried expression on her face. *What is it?* She thought back to him.

Vader caressed a thumb over her cheek. *After we part, I need you to warn Kenobi. You must warn him that the rebellion will be getting more members rather soon. An entire Destroyer full. He paused, allowing his words to sink in. I have come across a camera that is recording as we speak. Palpatine is likely watching us right now.*

He felt Rey tense.

He shook his head ever-so-slightly. *He is afraid of me. I want to remind him why.* A pause. *Can you play along with me?*

A small smirk and a raised brow was her response.

Vader grinned. Caressed her cheek once again. “I’ve found out more information about our bond; about our connection with one another.”

“Oh?” She tucked a loose strand of hair behind her ear.

“It is more than a Master-Padawan bond. So much more.” He looked Rey in the eyes. “It is stronger, more powerful.” He shook his head slightly. “It cannot be broken. By anyone or anything. It transcends time and space. It lasts forever; for all eternity.”

He could feel Rey’s heart racing as if it was his own.
“It is the balance: the light and the dark. The good and the bad. The Jedi and the Sith. It is the will of the Force, and it will not be broken.” He looked up at the camera, making certain Palpatine was paying close attention. “I am Darth Vader, Sith Lord. But… I am also Anakin Skywalker, Jedi Knight. You’ve helped me to remember that. You’ve helped remind me who I truly am.”

He looked back down at Rey. Her emotions were humming strongly. Her lip wobbling.

He brushed his thumb over her lip. “I will bring balance to the Force. I am the Chosen One. I will do my duty.”

“And I’ll help you,” Rey whispered quietly. “You don’t have to do it alone. You are not alone.”

“Neither are you.”

She faded away from him. Leaving him in silence.

Anakin quirked his head at the camera in the ventilation duct. “I am Anakin Skywalker, and I am coming for you.”

He reached a hand out and pulled the camera out of the duct. Tearing down the customized air supply.

He strolled out of his and Padmé’s apartment. Cape billowing behind him.

He needed to move fast.

He could feel the Emperor’s fear wafting hard against his shields. His fear and anger.

His hatred.

“I could really use a lift right now, if you would be so kind.” He made his way down towards the
hangar attached to the skyscraper.

“On our way, Sir,” TK-9170 responded in his earpiece. “We will be there in under two minutes.” A pause. “Are we expecting some resistance?”

“Always expect resistance,” Anakin responded as he pushed open the heavy doors leading into the semi-private hangar.

He strolled into the hangar, finding a solitary guard on duty.

The man was terrified as he took a look at who had come into his hangar. “Greetings Lord Vader,” he squeaked before clearing his throat.

A communications device began alerting the two of them of an incoming call.

Anakin quirked his head at it, then looked back at the guard. Daring him to answer the comm.

“Is there anything I can help you with, Lord Vader?” The guard winced at his silly question. He turned to look at Anakin directly. His back facing the communications device.


The guard straightened out his uniform. “I should go for a caf break. I deserve it.” He gave Anakin a curt nod of his head before carrying out his orders. His suggestion.

Anakin moved towards the end of the hangar, ignoring the persistent ringing of the comm link.

Palpatine had to be gathering forces. He needed to get off of this planet, away from the Core. Away from the Empire.

Off in the distance he spotted an Imperial Dropship Transport weaving in and out of the speeder traffic.
“Thank the Force,” he muttered to himself. IDT’s were more heavily armed than Lambda-Class shuttles. Easier to fly as well.

It was the vessel of choice for TK-9170 and his crew.

The IDT pulled up along side the edge of the hangar. Its loading ramp hummed open.

“Sir,” TK-9170 greeted him with a wave. “You called for a ride?” He stepped to the side allowing Anakin to leap up onto the ramp. He slapped the button to close the ramp. “We’ll likely need to shoot our way out of here. The Destroyers up above us are readjusting into a fighting formation. Commander Montferrat said to hurry.”

“Then let’s shoot our way out,” Anakin replied with a grin. He had never been able to do subtlety well.

He took a seat next to his former soldiers. Buckling himself in.

“We have the package, returning to base,” the pilot called out over the radio. The IDT sped away from his and Padmé’s home.

“Be prepared for some resistance. We are beginning to take fire.”


“Understood.”

Anakin closed his eyes in relief. A weight was slowly beginning to lift off of his shoulders.

Soon he would be able to see his children. To see Luke and Leia.
Obi-Wan and Ahsoka.

Soon he’d be able to see Rey once again.

That was where he belonged. Fighting next to her.

Bringing balance to the Force.
“Wait, what?” Obi-Wan held up his hand to stop Rey. “Say it all again. Slower.”

Rey exhaled slowly, keeping eye contact with the Jedi Knight in front of her. “I just finished up a bond visit with Master Anakin.” Obi-Wan nodded, gesturing for her to continue. “He wanted me to tell you, Obi-Wan, that the Rebellion will be getting a Destroyer full of new recruits.”

“Are you serious?” Mothma cut in.

Rey nodded.

Obi-Wan’s eyes were full of hope. “He said that?”

Rey nodded once again. “He mentioned that Palpatine had set up a camera in his home. I think it was his home; I didn’t really have a good look around or anything.” She shook her head. All she knew was that the place he was at was large. It was fancier than anything she had ever seen before. “He said Palpatine was afraid of him, that he wanted to remind him why he should be afraid.” A pause. “He started talking about our bond. Said that it transcends all of time and space. That it couldn’t be broken. That our bond was the balance. The light and dark together. The Jedi and the Sith.” She sniffed. “He said that he was the Chosen One, and that it was his duty to bring balance to the Force.” A pause. “I said I’d help him do that.”

“We can’t house them all,” Mothma frowned at Rey. Annoyed. “And don’t get me started on the food supply.”

“They can stay on their Destroyer for the most part,” Obi-Wan shook his head at the chancellor. “They’d also have their own food.”

“Destroyers carry up to two years worth of consumables,” Rey chimed in. She waited for the chancellor’s response.

“Well I highly doubt anyone here beside the few of you would feel comfortable with Darth Vader strolling around the base,” Mothma continued to argue. She pursed her lips at the pair. “I do hope
you haven’t told him where we are located.” She looked at Rey pointedly.

Rey could feel Obi-Wan’s annoyance. His frustration. “Breha was close to finishing up her task with the healers. Anakin shouldn’t have to stroll around the base in his suit. Not for very long, at least.” He gave Rey a shaky smile. “Can you find and bring Breha here please?”

“Of course.” Rey turned and left the command centre, in search of her friend.

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Anakin made his way through his fortress on Mustafar, medical droids, spare limbs, and TK-9170 trailing not far behind. He paused at the entrance of the hangar, next to a computer in the wall.

“Get on the shuttle,” he told the trooper and his droids. “I need to make some adjustments to the security protocols.”

He signed into the system bringing up the droid settings. Hesitating for only a second, Anakin set them to their highest settings — lethal. For everyone, including him. A prompt came up on the screen asking if he was certain. Confirming his commands brought him to the main screen.

He logged out once again. And hurried towards the waiting shuttle. They had two minutes before the commands would take effect.

They needed to move.

Stepping into the shuttle, he closed the loading ramp. The vessel began pulling up and away from his fortress.

“Do you think the trap will work, sir?” TK-9170 asked him quietly. Curious.

Anakin grimaced. “The first search here will work. Protocol states that they must carry out a search in person. The soldiers tasked with that will have to do what they are ordered. After that they will know it is a trap.”
A curt nod. “Next stop Jedha?”

“Indeed.” They needed to pick up the handful of soldiers Montferrat left behind. It was a risky move, but they wouldn’t leave their men behind if they could prevent it.

Anakin blinked, running through the steps of the plan. As of right now, the tracking beacons for the *Devastator* were left inside the medical facility in Vader Fortress. At Jedha, they’d leave behind the beacons found in the smaller vessels — the TIE’s, Lambda-class shuttles, AT-AT and AT-ST’s, as well as the troop transports. They were much more difficult to track, giving them time.

Once that was complete, the *Devastator* would truly be a ghost ship. Stealthy and untraceable. Yet weaponized better than most of the other Destroyers in the Imperial Navy.

A bleep sounded from his datapad tucked in his belt.

Anakin reached behind himself, pulling the datapad out to take a look.

*Moomba has okayed the new recruits. Reluctantly. The Rebellion needs the manpower.*

*Still uncertain about you. Doesn’t want you walking around the base in your life support suit. It might draw some unwanted attention.*

*Would help if you had some information to buy your way in. You know how politicians work.*

*Breha says her contact has almost everything needed to get you out of your suit. They are still searching for synthskin for your wounds apparently. It is difficult to obtain outside of the Core Worlds; much more specialized than the synthskin used to cover cybernetic limbs. Healer has suggested an experimental healing bath. Would like to know if you are open to that idea, or if synthskin is a must?*

*Let me know when you are ready. I will give you the location of our base.*
Anakin closed his eyes in relief. They would be allowed in. Hopefully, he would as well. He nodded mentally to himself, he had read about healing baths only a few years ago. They were still in the trial stages if he remembered correctly. He began typing his response.

*I am open to the healing bath. I am uncertain if synthskin would adhere properly to my current flesh. I would likely need to heal further.*

*Have information on the second Death Star. Palpatine informed me during our last meeting. Assuming what he told me was true, that is.*

*Must pick up a few things before we head to your base. Will likely take a few weeks to make certain we do not have a tail.*

*Have removed tracking beacons from the Devastator. Will continue to search to make certain we are not leading the Imperial Navy to your Rebels.*

*That would be most inconvenient.*

“We have a place to call home, sir?” TK-9170 asked. Anakin could feel his uncertainty.

Anakin quirked his head to take a better look at the soldier. “You all do. I am uncertain if I will.” A slight pause. “It depends on how much the chancellor of the Republic Alliance hates me. My information may not be enough.” He frowned. Unease pooling in his gut; it was really up to Mothma. “We have a history. It is not a pleasant one.”

He could feel TK-9170’s hesitation. He wanted to ask a question. He wanted more information. “Ask,” he insisted to his loyal soldier. “No punishment.”

Nervousness hummed now. “Is she a former lover? Someone you ditched to…” he gestured to his life support suit.

Anakin blinked. He wasn’t expecting that question. He shook his head. “I helped kill her lover.” A beat of silence. “Sliced his arm off and watched as Palpatine tortured him before tossing him out of the window of his office in the Senate.” He swallowed, hesitant. “That happened before I ended up
in this suit.” He gestured to himself. “That was when I pledged my allegiance to the Emperor.”

The greatest mistake of his life, he could admit that now. It was a stupid, idiotic mistake.

The shuttle rocked slightly as the pilot brought it in to land in the hangar.

Anakin continued to watch TK-9170. “Any other questions? This will be your last chance to ask.”

“Were you a Jedi sir?” The trooper’s surprise at his own question hummed strongly around the vessel. “I’ve heard stories about them.” He was looking at Anakin’s lightsaber clipped to his belt.

Anakin grinned. He always knew TK-9170 knew more than he let on. “Not a very good one.” He paused a moment. “And most of those stories you’ve heard about them are lies.”

A curt nod of his head. “The good stuff or the bad?”

Anakin hit the button to drop the loading ramp. “Both.” He led his droids and wheeled his spare limbs out of the shuttle. TK-9170 followed behind him with the pilot.

Montferrat was standing off to the side, waiting to greet them. “Any news?” he asked once Anakin stepped closer to him.

“I’ve heard from my contact,” he began. “Everyone here is welcome at the Rebel base. They are in need of some troopers apparently.” The two of them continued walking out of the hangar, making their way towards the medical facility on board the Destroyer. “I’ve been told to bring some information with me, to smooth things over. Politicians.”

He could feel Montferrat’s grin. “Of course.”

“We will need to make certain we are not being followed. I will not risk bringing the entire Navy onto their doorstep.” Anakin stopped just outside the medical ward. “Some individuals there are far too valuable.”
A slow nod of his head. “Your… apprentice?” Montferrat frowned at his choice of words.

“Yes.” A pause. “Also my children.” Anakin pushed the doors to the medical facility open, leaving Jhared standing dumbly just outside.

“I will leave my own personal droids with you,” he said to the first healer he spotted in the room. “They are for me only. I must have some privacy within the next few days in a bacta tank here. My droids will know what to do.”

“Certainly Lord Vader.” The healer looked down at the datapad in her hands. “Tomorrow overnight should work. There are no appointments in the schedule as of yet.”

A curt nod of his head. It would have to do. “Please ensure that time is left open only for me. I will need seven to eight hours in the tank.”

“Yes my Lord.”

“I will leave my spare limbs in here with you.” He wheeled the container with two extra arms and legs to the healer. “I likely will not need them, but I ask that you keep them safe, just in case.”

The healer cautiously took the container from Anakin. “Of course, sir.” Hesitation hummed strongly from the woman. Fear. “I am ashamed to say, sir, that I do not have the ability to engineer cybernetic limbs to you. At least nothing to this degree. I did not master that while at the academy. Someone else must be present to carry out the surgery properly.” She was afraid of his reaction.

Anakin nodding in understanding. This was something he was already well-aware of. She had passed out during her surgery placement. Twice. She was lucky she even got her healing licence. Her top grades in everything else pulled her through to graduation.

“I know.” He tried to reassure her. “I don’t expect you to carry out surgery on me. These are just for safe-keeping, in case my current limbs get damaged. Nothing more.”

Relief wafted against his shields. “Understood my Lord. I will put them in a safe place.”
Anakin nodded before turning to leave the medical facility. Jhared was waiting for him just outside the doors. A humble expression on his face.

“How long will it take us to reach Jedha?” He asked the commander. “I assume we will go straight there?”

Jhared cleared his throat. “Yes sir. We will be there in a few hours.” The two of them continued on towards the command bridge. “After we pick them up we will need to take a less direct route to get where we need to go.”

“Of course,” Anakin responded quietly. He needed to ask Obi-Wan where they were located so the pilots of the _Devastator_ could begin to plan out a route.

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“Are you certain this isn’t a trap?” A woman called out from somewhere behind Rey as Mothma explained to the Rebellion that the _Devastator_ would be arriving at their base sometime over the next few days.

Rey waited as the Chancellor paused before responding. Watching Rey closely. Uncertainty in her eyes for only a moment before it disappeared completely.

“I’m sure,” she stated loudly and clearly. “I am aware that the entire crew of the _Devastator_ has defected from the Empire. I have been in contact with a handful of its crew members, as has General Draven.”

“What about the former crew members?” A soldier asked quietly near Rey. He was looking at his hand, lost in thought. He closed it in a fist. “Former commanders specifically.” He waited for Mothma to answer him.

“Wait.” Another man cut in. “What do you mean?” He was looking at his fellow soldier.

Mothma cleared her throat. Rey turned her attention back to her. Obi-Wan was now standing next to her. “That is possible, yes,” she admitted quietly. “Someone who has been helping us for well over a year now. Without their help, I can assure you the majority of us would not be here.”
“Can someone explain it a bit clearer?” A voice called out. “I’m tired of the banthashit speak. Get to the kriffing point.”

“Darth Vader has abandoned his post next to the Emperor,” Obi-Wan stated clearly. “There is now a reward posted for his death. The payment is fifty million Imperial credits upon proof.” A pause. “He is among the deserters aboard the Devastator.”

The uproar was intense. Rey grimaced as she felt a sudden surge in emotions.

“Keep it down, would you?” Ahsoka snapped at the gathered group, gesturing to her lekku. “He’s not going to kill you Jafan. You’ve nothing to worry about.” She rolled her eyes at a man Rey had never really noticed before.

“How can you be so sure?”

Rey could feel the fear begin to permeate the room. She cleared her throat quietly. “There is nothing in it for him to kill you all, but there is everything for him to lose.” She was watching Mothma closely. The Chancellor’s focus was entirely on Rey. “He won’t hurt anyone here. I promise.”

“How can you know that?”

“Because I know him,” Rey answered curtly. “I trust him with my life.”

“As do I.” Ahsoka nodded, crossing her arms across her chest. Waiting for anyone to challenge her.

Obi-Wan exhaled slowly. “I do as well.”

“He’s saved my life countless times,” Rex piped up as he stood with his squadron. “I trust him.”

Silence for a few moments as everyone slowly began to digest what was going on.
“I don’t know if I feel comfortable with him walking around the base,” the man near Rey stated quietly. Flexing his hand once more.

Rey closed her eyes in understanding. He had been one of the soldiers above Scarif.

“He is more than open to staying on the Destroyer as much as possible,” Obi-Wan stated quietly. “He’d likely only come down here for meetings.”

“We could also move our meetings up there if need be,” Mothma told the room. “Temporarily at least.” A slight compromise.

“Do we actually have a choice in all this, or are you merely informing us what is happening?”

Rey’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead. They definitely had a point.

Mothma swallowed. “I am informing you. The decision has already been made.” A quiet confirmation.

Rey made eye contact with Ahsoka for a short moment before making her way through the crowd. She didn’t need to listen to the rest of the bickering. She didn’t care what they had to say. What they felt the need to argue about.

She was anxious with anticipation.

She made her way out of the mess hall and strolled towards Breha and Bail’s private suite.

The Organa’s and Luke didn’t feel the need to participate in the discussion and had opted to hide out in their quarters — something that Rey wished she had considered sooner.

She knocked gently on the door and waited for an answer.

Shuffling of feet could be heard from the other side of the door.
“Good thinking, Rey,” Ahsoka muttered from behind her.

Rey turned half-heartedly to look at the togruta. “I couldn’t handle being around so much fear. Needed to get away.” She gave her a tight grin.

Threepio pulled open the door in that moment. “Good morning Miss Rey and Miss Tano, Her Majesty is waiting for you.”

“Breha is fine Threepio,” a voice called out from inside the suite.

The protocol droid shuffled back to allow the two women entry.

“Thank you Threepio,” Rey said kindly to him as she made her way by.

She found the small group of people sitting around the large table, just finishing up their breakfast.

Breha gestured for both Rey and Ahsoka to take a seat with the rest of them. “Did anything interesting happen?”

Rey shook her head. “Not really.”

Ahsoka grabbed a leftover piece of meat off of Luke’s plate. “Mothma told everyone that it wasn’t something they had a say in, said that she was just letting them know of the decision already made.”

Bail raised a brow. “Bet that went over well.” He grinned slightly as he took a sip of his caf.

“It’s why we left early,” Rey chimed in as she grabbed some rehydrated bread.

She gave him a nod of her head. “ Likely. You could just be nervous to see Anakin in person as well.” She looked over at Leia who was listening intently. “ Both of you may be nervous and you’re picking up on it. Feeding off of each other ” She shrugged. “ It’s nothing to be ashamed of.”

“How much longer until he gets here?” Leia questioned the togruta. “ Mama didn’t say.”

“ Few days.” Rey chewed her bread, humming quietly. “ The chancellor said that he might just stay on the Destroyer. People were uncomfortable with having Darth Vader walking around the base.”

“I would think most of the crew aboard the Destroyer will stay there, at least initially,” Breha murmured thoughtfully. “ It’s where they are most comfortable.”

Rey nodded her agreement. “ Have you heard back at all from your healer contact?” She was worried they wouldn’t be able to get any synthskin for Anakin.

Breha gave her a kind, understanding smile. “ I did.” She took a sip of her caf. “ Healer Brimen has just left a medical conference on Cardota. There he was able to obtain a small sample of synthskin as well as the healing bath powder. We have everything to carry out the surgeries.” A pause. “ We will have to figure out the best time to leave for Polis Massa once Anakin arrives here.”

“What does he look like?” Luke asked quietly. “ Outside of his suit, I mean.” He was looking at Rey, Ahsoka, and Breha.

“He used to look a lot like you Luke,” Ahsoka told him kindly. “ His hair was a bit longer than yours is now, and a bit darker. But, you both have the same eyes.”

“He’s somewhat taller than you though,” Bail added in. “ You got your mother’s height. The both of you did.”

“And now?” Leia questioned. She waited for Rey to answer her.

Rey frowned. “ He’s bald now. Has eyebrows though. Sort of.” She hesitated, uncertain what she should tell them. “ Um… he has some scarring on his face and torso. From what’s left of his arms and legs, he is strong. Muscular. His limbs are heavy,” she tried to explain to them.
“He has a really dry sense of humour,” Ahsoka carried on. “Not too keen on politicians — Padmé was of course the exception.”

“Why?” Leia’s curiosity was humming strongly around the quarters.

“He grew up a slave while the Galactic Republic collectively told everyone that slavery was abolished. They stuck their heads in the sand while people were bought and sold on a regular basis. And not just on Tatooine. Almost everywhere. It just went more underground after it was officially abolished, or became more legitimized.” Rey swallowed, her throat tight. She had asked him the exact same question when she was hiding on the Devastator.

“How does slavery become more legitimized?” Leia asked incredulously. “I don’t understand.” She looked to her mother and father.

“By purchasing people for personal use rather than economic use,” Bail told his daughter sadly. He was shaking his head. “Many spouses — not all — were purchased if a senator, king, queen, or whomever needed a spouse and they couldn’t find one appropriate enough through the regular channels.”

“It wasn’t very common,” Breha cut in. “At least, not to my knowledge. But, there were always rumours in certain circles on certain worlds. ‘Questionable courting’ was what a few of us liked to refer to it as, when I was a young girl. I am ashamed to say I never thought much of it except in idle amusement. I thought it was silly that some rulers or senators or business owners could not find spouses in the socially acceptable channels. I never thought of the reasons why until I was much older.”

Silence for a few moments as Leia digested what she had learned.

“What else is he like?” Luke asked quietly.

“He’s loyal… sometimes to a fault,” Ahsoka informed him. Her eyes were sad. “Palpatine was close with Anakin when he first arrived at the Temple. He always kept a close watch over him. Had meetings with him when he was still a Padawan. Wanted to know everything that was going on in the Order. Anakin was his eyes and ears.” A pause. “Anakin trusted him with a lot. Too much, really.”
“He can be somewhat intense,” Rey chimed in. “I’m not sure if he was like that before…” she looked to Ahsoka for her opinion.

She was shaking in silent laughter. “Yep. When he was a Jedi Knight too. He is very driven and focused. Emotional. He felt everything.” She exhaled slowly. “He was an amazing Master to me when I was a Padawan at the Temple, before I left the Order. I wouldn’t have survived as long as I have without his training.”

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Rey sat cross-legged on top of a boulder near the T-47 she had been working on for the better part of the morning.

She had stopped her maintenance long ago, and was instead peering up at the blue sky, waiting for the Devastator to drop out of hyperspace above her. She wanted to see her Master again. Soon.

She was growing impatient.

The crunch of gravel behind her coming closer. “He’ll be here soon,” Obi-Wan muttered quietly into her ear. “Word just got sent that they are minutes away.”

Rey exhaled slowly. Her heart began to race. She was picking up both hers and Anakin’s anxiety. “He’s nervous.” She tried to send comfort to him across their bond.

“He’s coming down here for the first meeting.” Obi-Wan sat down next to her. “Mothma insisted. Told everyone who wasn’t comfortable to sit out of the meeting if they needed to. That they’d be filled in afterwards.”

“She’s sure changed her tune.”

Obi-Wan shook his head. “It’s only politics. It’s considered incredibly rude to not welcome guests into your home, or in this case, your base.”

“Ahh.” Rey snorted quietly. She should’ve known better.
A large ship dropped out of hyperspace directly above them.

Rey crinked her neck as she looked up at the belly of the Destroyer. “Master Anakin is here,” she said pleasantly to Obi-Wan. She turned slightly to look at him with a grin on her face.

He returned her grin with one of his own. “That he is.” He helped her off of her boulder and the two made their way back indoors.

The hangar was beginning to fill with the Rebel High Command. Waiting for their guests to arrive so they could get down to business.

“Should I stand somewhere?” Rey asked Obi-Wan quietly as they made their way through the hangar. “I’m not used to these things.”

“Just stand next to me,” Obi-Wan assured her. He made his way over to Ahsoka who was standing with the Organa’s and Luke. Han and Chewbacca were near them as well.

Rex and his squadron took their place in between them and the High Command members. His soldiers were in full gear. Their blasters held tightly in front of them.

Rex was grinning at Ahsoka, whispering something to her that had her desperately holding back her laughter.

A Lambda-class T-4a shuttle slowly came in to land on the outside hangar. Its lower wings folding up as it settled on the ground. The ramp lowered to the ground once the engines were cut.

Half a dozen stormtroopers took up formation on either side of the lowered ramp.

Commander Montferrat made his way down the ramp first. The inky black of Anakin’s life support suit remained camouflaged in the darkness of the inside of the shuttle. He waited to descend the ramp until Montferrat made his way past the troopers.
His steps were heavy as he quickly moved down the durasteel ramp. Following closely behind the Commander of the *Devastator* as the two of them made their way closer to the waiting Chancellor of the Rebel Alliance.

Rey could hear the gasps as people took in the towering Sith Lord. She could feel their fear pummeling hard against her shields.

“For fuck’s sake,” Ahsoka muttered quietly. “Calm down people.”

Mothma was smiling at the two of them, curtsying ever-so-slightly. Her expression was strained. Her eyes were worried.

Words were spoken between the two former Imperial Commanders and the Chancellor, but Rey couldn’t quite hear what was being said.

She sighed. Shaking her head at the ridiculousness of it all. The pomp and circumstance.

Anakin turned suddenly, looking directly at her. Amusement was humming through their bond.

Rey blinked, shocked at the attention.

Anakin held out his elbow, as if he was telling her without words to come stand by his side.

*I am*, he muttered to her through their bond. *Please don’t make me look a fool.*

Rey scurried over to his side, hooking her hand in the crook of his elbow. “Master Vader,” she greeted him pleasantly. “It’s been far too long.”

She could feel his grin behind his mask.

“It has my young Padawan. I insist you join us for our meeting.” He patted her hand on his elbow. “We have much to catch up on.”
“Is that really necessary?” Mothma questioned rudely.

Rey turned her attention to the Chancellor standing before her. Hands on her hips. Annoyance on her face.

“I insist,” Anakin snapped at the Chancellor. Pleasantries forgotten. “Lead the way, Chancellor Mothma. Let’s get down to business.”

The troopers still standing in formation at the ramp of the shuttle snapped once again to attention. Stomping with each foot simultaneously on the spot and twirling their weapons in a sudden display of power before readjusting their hold on their blasters. Once again taking up a peaceful stance.

Rey had to bite her lip from laughing out loud at the display. The soldiers were amused at their leader’s tone with the Chancellor. They were apparently showing their strength to the Rebel’s High Command. Reminding them just who was waiting high above the base on the *Devastator*.

The Chancellor frowned once again before turning sharply without comment, leading the visitors down the winding hallway to the command centre of the Rebel Alliance.

“Hello,” Rey greeted Commander Montferrat quietly as they turned the last corner before the meeting location.

He grinned down at her, eyes crinkling. “Good morning, Miss Rey.”

The group made their way into the room, Anakin gesturing to Montferrat to take the seat at the table.

He stood with Rey behind the Commander, facing Mothma and a handful of other High Command members.

Rey watched as Ahsoka and Obi-Wan slid inside the room after Breha and Bail Organa. The door shut with a heavy snap, signalling the start of the meeting.
Mothma cleared her throat. “This signals the start of the meeting between Commander Montferrat of the Star Destroyer *Devastator*, and Lord Vader. It is seven minutes after eleven hundred hours.” A pause as she looked at the Commander before her. “In our communication with one another, you’ve mentioned that you have vital information for the Republic Alliance.” She clasped her hands in front of her waiting for a response.

“I do,” Montferrat replied pleasantly as he reached into his pocket. He slid a small datacard across the table to Mothma. “On there are the current and future flight plans of not only the Death Squadron, but the rest of the Imperial Navy. You can corroborate them with the plans you received that are a decade old.” A pause as he quirked his head slightly. “Lord Vader has information regarding the second Death Star.”

“And that is?”

“The Empire has completed the first stage of construction and the weapon is currently being moved to its secondary location by a Destroyer in the Death Squadron.” Anakin looked at Rey for a moment. “I have reason to believe the weapon is being moved to Endor where it will be completed.”

“And where did you obtain this information?” Mothma raised a solitary brow at Anakin.

Rey glared at the woman. Her attitude was beyond ridiculous. It was insulting.

Anakin patted her hand once again, telling her to calm down. “From Emperor Palpatine on Coruscant. The Imperial Palace specifically.” A short pause. “I would be more than happy to show you my memory of the incident if you would so desire Chancellor.”

She waved his offer off. “That is not necessary. I trust your word.”

Anakin nodded in understanding. He shuffled slightly. “I trust your recruiters got back safely from Jedha?”

Mothma nodded in confirmation. “They did. Thank you for the warning.” She gave Montferrat a tight smile. “How long until we can restart our recruitment drives there?”

“You cannot recruit from there any longer,” Montferrat informed her. “The Emperor knows of the
gatherings on Jedha. The Imperial Navy will be laying in wait if they are not already.”

“How does he know of this?” Mothma was concerned.

Montferrat sighed. “I told him during our meeting in the Imperial Palace, I had to. I informed him of the rumour of Rebel recruitment drives on Jedha. I said we had just missed the latest gathering, but word was that the recruitment meetings happened often on the moon.” He shook his head at the Chancellor. “You will have to find somewhere else to recruit. It is not safe on Jedha any longer.”

The Chancellor nodded in understanding. “We will do that then.” She sighed. “Thank you for this information.” She gestured to the datacard in front of her. “Both of you.” She nodded at Anakin. “Was there anything else that needed to be addressed at the moment, or can it wait until our morning meeting tomorrow at oh-eight-hundred hours?”

Both the Commander and Anakin shook their heads in response.

Breha cleared her throat. “I do have something that needs to be addressed.” She smiled at Anakin. “Although it is best to be done in private if that is at all possible.”

Rey could feel Anakin’s anticipation humming strongly against her shields. She squeezed his arm in confirmation.

“Would you be open to discussing this in my quarters?” he asked her quietly. He couldn’t keep the shock out of his voice, even with his vocoder.

Breha gestured to the door. “Lead the way, General.”

Anakin was grinning now. Rey could feel it in her cheeks.

Rey walked with Anakin back towards the hangar. Towards the Lambda-class shuttle. Luke, Leia, and Rex joined them as they boarded the T-4a. Obi-Wan and Ahsoka brought up the rear.

Rey took a look around at the six stormtroopers sitting in the shuttle seats. It was a little strange
being in such close proximity to troopers without feeling the need to take out a blaster to defend herself. It would take some time to get used to.

It wasn’t long before the shuttle powered up once again and began its liftoff. Making the short journey to the Star Destroyer above.
“What’s that?” Luke questioned as the small group took their seats in his quarters aboard the Devastator.

Anakin didn’t have to look at what Luke was referring to. Instead he continued to watch his son. “My hyperbaric chamber. It’s where I go if I wish to take off my helmet.”

“That’s the only place?” Luke’s concern was humming around the room.

Anakin grinned at his innocence. His naivety. “There or in a bacta tank.”

Luke’s shock was now evident on his face. The seriousness of Anakin’s situation was beginning to be understood. “Oh.”

“Have you ever been in a bacta tank Luke?” He was curious about his life on Tatooine and with the Rebellion.

Luke shook his head adamantly. “No sir.”

Anakin winced. “There’s no need to call me sir, Luke. Anakin is fine.” He wouldn’t push him to call him father. Not if he wasn’t comfortable with it.

It was strange being in the same room as both his son and daughter. Seeing Luke during his and Rey’s bond visit was very different. They were both exceptionally emotional then.

Vulnerable.

“You never got hurt while growing up on Tatooine?” That was an accomplishment in itself.

Luke shook his head, shrugging. “Nothing major.”
Anakin looked to Obi-Wan to confirm. The Jedi Knight had a slight grin on his face. “I stepped in once or twice before he was hurt too badly,” he admitted quietly.

Luke frowned, turning in his seat to look at Obi-Wan directly. “When? I mean… I remember the times when I was older. But…”

“When you decided it was a good idea to take on Jabba the Hutt’s henchmen when you were eight years old, for example.” Obi-Wan raised an eyebrow at Luke. Challenging him. “Who do you think knocked out the lights so you couldn’t be identified? How do you think you got back to the farm after being knocked unconscious?”

Luke frowned. “Oh.” He glared at the table. “They shouldn’t have stolen our water. It was ours, not theirs. I was just trying to get it back.”

Anakin grinned slightly. His righteousness was hauntingly familiar. Luke reminded him of Padmé.

He looked to Leia, quirking his head at her.

“I always stay out of trouble,” she told him with a smirk.

“Except when you’re above Scarif, participating in crimes against the Empire, you mean?” He couldn’t help but challenge her.

Her smirk turned into a full blown smile. “I was on a diplomatic mission from Alderaan. Nothing more. Happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, I suppose.” She shrugged. Her innocence was now plastered on her face. The look of a politician who was obviously up to no good.

Bail and Breha had taught her well.

Anakin narrowed his eyes at Leia. “Or perhaps it was the right place at the right time.” He couldn’t help his smirk as he shook his head at his daughter. She was lucky her time above Scarif didn’t lead to anything worse. Like it had in Rey’s time.
He turned his attention to Breha and Bail Organa. “You mentioned you heard from your healer?” He prompted Breha.

Breha nodded, a slight smile on her face. “I have. Healer Brimen has recently left a medical conference on Cordata. There he was able to obtain the healing bath powder.” She swallowed. “He also was able to obtain a small sample of synthskin. He mentioned this morning in our correspondence that it will take two to three weeks to properly rehydrate the sample.”

“And after that?” He was afraid to get his hopes up.

“And after that he can accept you for your surgery,” Breha finished.

Anakin blinked. He had never really thought it was possible. He never believed he’d ever get out of his suit. “What’s the success rate? Do you know?” Uncertain if he actually wanted to know the statistics for a surgery as complex as his.

Breha shook her head. “He mentioned just general success rates; said anywhere from thirty to sixty percent. That it depended on the patient. That it depended on how severely they were hurt. How healthy they were besides the obvious organ damage.” A pause. “He said that age played a factor as well.”

Guilt began wafting around the room. Shame.

Anakin shook his head, focusing on Obi-Wan sitting on the far side of the table. “Don’t feel guilty about that. Please.” A pause. A hesitation. “I know now that you tried to get me to back off. Repeatedly. I know that. You defended against me as I attacked and attacked and attacked. You tried to get me to stop, Obi-Wan. This isn’t your fault.” He gestured to his suit. “This is all mine.”

“I didn’t have to leave you burning,” Obi-Wan choked out. “I just left you there.”

“Sidious arrived shortly after you fled with Padmé,” Anakin told him. He wasn’t certain how soon after Palpatine had arrived, but it didn’t matter. It wasn’t important. “He would’ve killed both of you if you had stuck around. He would’ve killed Luke and Leia as well. You know that.”
Obi-Wan nodded, but otherwise remained silent as he worked to get his emotions back under control.

Rey reached out a hand to Anakin. Wanting to bring him comfort.

Anakin blinked as he reached for Rey’s hand underneath the table. Giving it a gentle squeeze as the two of them connected.

“Does anyone want food?” Anakin asked his guests. He knew Kenobi didn’t want any attention. That his slip in control would make him self-conscious. “We stopped by Naboo before coming here.”

“Did you get that bread?” Rey asked him. She couldn’t hide her excitement.

Anakin grinned. “Of course.” He turned to look at the others sitting around the table. “Has anyone else had five-blossom bread before?”

“It’s been a long time,” Ahsoka grinned at him. A sparkle in her eyes as she made a point of looking between Anakin and Rey. “But, if it’s as good as I remember, I’d love me a roll.”

Anakin rolled his eyes. Knowing full-well that she couldn’t see. He wasn’t looking forward to dealing with Ahsoka’s teasing. He had to deal with it already through messages on their respective datapads.

In person would undoubtedly be worse.

“What’s five-blossom bread?” Luke asked him quietly. Bringing him back to the here and now.

“It’s a Nabooian specialty, dear.” Breha smiled at him. “It is one of their national delicacies.”

“It’s delicious,” Rex and Bail chimed in at the same time.

“Padmé used to make it sometimes,” Anakin told his son quietly. “Said hers was the best.”
“Was it?” Leia questioned him. A sad smile on her face.

Anakin shrugged. “I think I only ever had hers. I can’t compare to other recipes.”

“I’d love some,” Leia told him quietly. “I’ve only ever heard of it, but I’ve never been to Naboo, so I never had the opportunity to try any.”

Anakin nodded in understanding. “SD-2826, can you bring us some food please? Make sure you have some bread with it.”

“Of course Master,” his droid answered him before wheeling out of his quarters.

The room became somewhat silent as his guests began to take in their surroundings.

“Did you stay in here Rey?” Luke broke the silence after a few moments. “When you arrived here, I mean.”

Rey nodded. “Yeah. Mostly in that room over there.” She gestured to the door on the side of the room. “It’s the meditation room. Has a refresher and everything.” She looked to Anakin, frowning. “Is it still the meditation room, or has Commander Montferrat moved in?”

Anakin shook his head. “Jhared is still living in his old quarters. He never got around to moving in here.” A pause. “It’s still a meditation room. Your pillow is in there if you want it back.” He couldn’t help his grin.

“Maybe we could meditate sometime,” Rey suggested quietly. “Like old times.” She couldn’t hide the blush on her cheeks, however slight it was. His eyepieces still picked it up.

Anakin nodded without responding. He wanted to spend some time with her too. That was what she was looking for; what he was looking for.

Time.
They needed to figure out what the hell was going on.

“Can I meditate with you?” Luke broke the silence once again. His curiosity humming around the room. He was watching Anakin closely. Uncertainly.

Anakin blinked. Swallowing tightly.

Luke first, was whispered across the bond.

“Of course,” he stumbled out. “After lunch?”


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Anakin led Luke into his meditation chambers after everyone had finished their lunch and were now returning to the base down below.

“This is nice,” Luke voiced to him as he slowly turned around, taking in the room. His eyes were darting from the fountains in the corners of the room, to the pile of pillows, to the grassy floor.

“I took inspiration from the meditation gardens at the Jedi Temple on Coruscant.” Former gardens. They had been destroyed during the purge.

“Can we go there one day?” Luke asked him quietly. “After everything is fixed?” He frowned. His curiosity was wafting hard against Anakin’s shields.

He shook his head. “No.” Please no. He didn’t want his son to feel what he had done decades earlier. He didn’t want him to sense the Jedi he had killed; the younglings he had slaughtered. Luke would hate him — despise him — and rightfully so.
Anakin focused on his son standing before him. “The garden is destroyed. The dark side of the Force has woven itself all throughout the temple. It isn’t a nice place to visit any longer.” Sidious’ touch would no doubt be felt for hundreds of years after his death. He didn’t doubt it for a second.

At Luke’s disappointment, he offered a suggestion. “There are other abandoned Jedi Temples, if that is what you wish to see. Perhaps we can visit one or two of them, so you can familiarize yourself with the Jedi way of life.” A pause. “How does that sound?” It was a compromise that he hoped Luke would take.


Anakin nodded in relief. Thankful that he wasn’t about to be interrogated about the Jedi Temple.

“Grab a pillow, Luke.” He gestured towards the pile of mismatched pillows he had taken from Padmé’s home years before. “Whichever one you would like — except for the tacky, ugly one that Rey has picked out for herself.”

He watched Luke grin and make his way over to the pile of pillows, choosing a rectangular blue one.

*Interesting.*

Anakin hummed to himself. The simplicity was likely the byproduct of growing up on Tatooine. It wasn’t anything he really worried about. But, the fact that Luke made his way over to the pile to select it was telling. He hadn’t just used to Force to bring the pillow to him.


It was something to take into consideration. Something that needed to be encouraged.

He needed to be comfortable if he was to truly feel the Force all around him.

Anakin slowly lowered himself down onto the grassy floor, gesturing for Luke to do the same.
Sitting cross-legged, he waited for his son to get comfortable before reaching out his hands for Luke to hold onto.

“I’ll follow you into your mediation,” he informed him once he held Luke’s hands in his own. “Whenever you are ready.”

Luke nodded before closing his eyes.

Anakin studied him for a moment before closing his eyes as well.

A moment or two of silence as Luke slowly began to enter into meditation.


Anakin slowly blinked his eyes open, taking in his son sitting cross-legged in front of him. He quirked his head at the comment. His mind slowly coming to terms with piggybacking into Luke’s meditation.

It was always an odd feeling. He felt the same with Ahsoka when they would meditate together long ago.

He cleared his throat. “Yes. You take after me for the most part, I think.” His voice sounded strange without his vocoder or its raspiness. “In your looks, at least.” He smiled at his son. “Your temperament reminds me of Padmé.”

“What was she like?” Luke asked him.

“Good.” Anakin smiled at him. “She was really, really good.” He couldn’t hide the pain in his voice like he could with his vocoder. He was exceptionally vulnerable.

Exposed.
He cleared his throat once more. “Did you want to go exploring?”

Luke nodded before cautiously rising up from the grassy ground. Making sure to hang onto Anakin’s hands as he did so.

It was far too risky to let go. Especially with Palpatine actively searching for them all.

Anakin followed Luke up onto his feet, taking a look around at their surroundings.

Below them were splashes of light — people congregating in groups as they went about their daily tasks. Off in the distance he could see a small group moving away from the Devastator — Rey and the others had boarded a shuttle and were making their way down to the base on Ajan Kloss.

“It’s different meditating on a ship,” Luke murmured quietly. He too was looking around at his surroundings.

“It is,” Anakin confirmed. “The vessel isn’t alive like a planet is. It limits what you can see during meditation, unless you reach out far.”

“But, we can’t do that here.”

He shook his head. “Not today. The next time we meditate together, I will come down to your base.”


Anakin grinned. “Of course.” He made a show of looking around the two of them. “Let’s see what people are up to.”

Together they made their way through the Destroyer, pausing here and there to get a better look at whatever peaked Luke’s interest.

“What do you do with the Rebellion?” Anakin broke the silence. He couldn’t help his curiosity
from humming around the pair of them. “What does the Chancellor have you doing?”

Luke sighed, looking down at his feet. “I just do a bit of patrolling in my T-47. I’m not really allowed to do much else after the Death Star.”

Anakin came to an abrupt halt. Tugging hard on Luke’s hand. “You are flying one of those pieces of garbage?” He couldn’t hide his anger. His disbelief.

Luke winced, taking a step back from him.

Anakin stood there, shocked as he tried to reign in his anger. He took a couple of deep breaths, bringing himself back under control. “I apologize. I didn't mean to lose my temper.”

Kriffing hell he was an idiot. He had no right to tell Luke what he could and could not do. He had given that up when he pledged allegiance to Sidious.

“IT’S fine,” Luke responded quietly. Uncertainly. “I take good care of my ship. I swear.” He tried to reassure Anakin. “Rey and the other mechanics here are good too. We are used to working with less optimal equipment.” He gave Anakin a wry grin. “Not everyone can fly a modified TIE Advanced, you know.”

Anakin swallowed tightly at the subtle chide. He nodded. “I apologize again.”

Luke nodded and continued his exploration. “On Tatooine I flew a T-16 Skyhopper. Used to bull’s-eye womp rats when I got bored. It was good target practice.”

“Your Skyhopper must have helped you become familiar with your Rebel’s x-wings.” Anakin couldn’t hide his grin. His pride at his son’s flying ability.

Luke nodded once again. “They’re your Rebel’s too, you know. Now they are, I mean.”

“No Luke.” A pause. A hesitation. “I don’t care for the Rebellion or the Empire. To me, they are exceptionally similar. The New Republic Alliance in Rey’s time is almost identical to the Galactic Republic that I grew up in. I hated it then, and I hate it now.” He stopped his strolling, making
certain Luke was paying close attention. “I have defected to your Rebels for entirely selfish reasons. For my children and my Padawan. That’s it. If you three were not here, I wouldn’t have come.” He shook his head at his son. Luke needed to understand. “I just want to kill Palpatine. Nothing more, nothing less. That’s it. It is my duty.”

“And when you do that?” Luke questioned him quietly. “What happens then?”

Anakin sighed, shrugging. “I will spend time with my children and with Rey. I will continue to teach Rey the ways of the Force. We will try to figure out our bond and what it means.” He shook his head. “Anything more than that I am not interested. I have been fighting this war since I was nine years old, Luke.” He thought of the time above Naboo when he took out the Trade Federation’s control ship. “I’m done being a general. I’m done being a soldier. I just want to be Anakin again.” He looked at his son as he slowly began to comprehend what was being said. “What do you plan to do after all this is over?”

They had just reached somewhere near to the command bridge. He could identify Montferrat’s Force signature anywhere. He had returned from the meeting with Chancellor Mothma.

Luke frowned for a moment, pondering the question. “I was thinking about rebuilding the Jedi Order.” He looked up at Anakin, gauging his reaction. “You aren’t surprised?”


“If I had rebuilt the Order, why did I refuse to teach Rey?” Luke asked him quietly. “Something bad happened, didn’t it?”

Anakin nodded his confirmation. “It did.” He wouldn’t lie to Luke. Refused to. “It is something we must remember and prevent from happening again.”

“What happened?” Luke was insistent. “Has Rey told you?”

Anakin looked at his feet, at the surface they were standing on. He couldn’t make eye contact with his son. “My actions led to someone following my path to the dark side. One of your students fell, Luke.” He looked back up at his son standing before him, grasping on tightly to his hand. Luke had tears in his eyes, but was refraining from breaking down completely. “I believe that event led you to hide away. I believe that event led you to seclude yourself from everyone. You stopped
teaching. You stopped… everything.”

“How do we stop that from happening?”

Anakin focused on his son, making certain he was paying close attention. “We don’t make the same mistakes again. Never again.” A poignant pause. “That is how we will prevent that from happening. I promise it will work.”

The conversation reminded him of Snoke.

He needed to kill that bastard too.

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“How was the rest of the meeting with the Chancellor?” Anakin asked once he had reached the commander’s quarters.

Jhared raised a single brow as he looked at him. A small grin on his face. “It was fine. Once you left she relaxed quite a bit.”

Anakin rolled his eyes. Of course she did. “Everything else was alright though?”

Montferrat nodded. “We just went over what was going on currently at the Base. She gave me information on the recently completed Rebellion missions. The outcomes, both positive and negative.” He sighed. “She also introduced me to a fair number of the individuals in their High Command. I even recognized a few from my time in the academy.”

“She mentioned a morning meeting?” Anakin prompted him.

The commander hummed. “Everyday at oh-eight-hundred hours. Seems a bit redundant to have one every single day. But, that is politics for you, I suppose.”

Anakin grinned. Jhared’s disdain for politics matched his own. “Are we having it here, or down
there?” He asked. “I know she mentioned up here earlier. Is that still the case?”

“It will be up here tomorrow morning.” Jhared confirmed. “We will have to play it by ear for any future meetings. See how people react.”

“Perhaps once I am out of my suit we can have them down there,” Anakin muttered more to himself. Perhaps he could spend more time there once that happened. With Rey. With his children.

It was something he was looking forward to.

Even being near them now felt like he was coming home. He was beginning to feel like he was at peace for the first time in a very, very long time.

It was an unfamiliar feeling that would take some time getting used to.

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Anakin quirked his head as he watched his TIE Advanced slowly come into land in the main hangar of the docking bay. Rey was at the helm, having asked earlier if she could come up to pay him a visit. He waited until she shut down the engine before making his way closer to her.

He had just reached the TIE when the hatch popped open and Rey pulled herself up, out of the little vessel.

Anakin paused just below the wing support, holding out a hand to help her down.

Instead, Rey tossed him her bag and hopped down from the TIE on her own, landing with a quiet thud on the floor of the hangar.

He couldn’t fight his smirk, she was in a cheeky mood today. He looked forward to spending some time with his Padawan.

“Have a good trip?” He asked her once the two of them made their way towards the turbolifts.
Rey snorted. “It was a two minute long trip, hardly worth mentioning.” She narrowed her eyes at him as they stepped into the lift. “But, I did enjoy flying your TIE for what it’s worth.”

Anakin nodded at her. “Thank you for returning it to me. I didn’t get a chance to take my other TIE’s from the Executor before we fled.”

He loved his TIE Advanced Prototype. He had spent hours helping to design it with the engineers at Sienar Fleet Systems. It really was a beautiful piece of engineering.

“How did you all get away?” Rey asked him once the doors opened. Her curiosity was humming strongly around the pair of them as they made their way down the hallway back towards his quarters. “It must have been difficult.”

He shook his head as he waved open the doors to his quarters. “Not too difficult, no. More exciting than anything.”

Rey chuckled as she made her way into the room, pausing before turning around to look at him. “Made for a nice change?”

Anakin grinned. “Indeed.” He waved the meditation chamber door open, gesturing for her to enter in before him. “Are you spending the night up here?” He assumed that was why she had brought her go-bag up here with her.

“If that’s alright with you.” Rey’s uncertainty was beginning to hum strongly around the room. “I figured I could travel back after the meeting with everyone else.”

“Of course,” Anakin assured her. “You are more than welcome to stay here for as long as you like.”

Rey nodded, suddenly shy. “Should we start meditating?”

“Of course.” He carefully set her bag down on the floor, grinning as Rey’s fluffy pillow flew into her hands.
He lowered himself onto the floor once again. Watching as his Padawan plopped down in front of him, sighing as she did so.

Her nervousness was wafting around the room. She was jittery with anticipation.

Anakin held out his hands to her, silently telling her to hang on. “There is no need to be nervous, Rey.”

She cleared her throat as she grabbed onto both of his hands, nodding as she did so. “I’m sorry.” A quiet apology. “I can’t help it. I’ve been anxious for the last few days.”

“Did you wish to follow me into meditation?” He doubted she’d be able to relax enough to fall into meditation without him pulling her along.

Rey nodded once again. “Please.” Her shame was now beginning to hum slightly around the two of them.

Anakin shook his head. “It’s nothing to be ashamed of Rey. It happens to the best of us.” He gave her hands a squeeze, trying to bring her comfort.

A few minutes of silence as he focused on his task. Slowly he began to relax, bringing Rey with him into meditation.


Anakin hummed in agreement as he blinked open his eyes. “It can be addictive sometimes. Especially in times of turmoil.” He sighed. “Did you want to go exploring, just want to sit around? What would you like, Rey?”

“Can we just stay here?” A quiet question. She was taking in his appearance. Committing it to memory.
He grinned. “Of course.”

He watched as Rey’s cheeks turned pink once again. His grin grew wider. She couldn’t hide her feelings from him. Not anymore. Especially not while they were meditating together.

“Did you want to stand?” He offered to her. He had an idea. One, he believed, she would be keen on.

Rey nodded. “Alright.” She slowly began to stand up. Careful to hang onto his hands when she did so.

Anakin followed her to his feet.

She was watching him questioningly. Her brow furrowed slightly as she tried to figure out what he was planning.

Anakin tugged her closer to him before wrapping both his arms around her. Holding her.

A sigh as Rey wrapped her arms around his torso. Squeezing him tightly. Afraid to let go.

“It’s alright Rey,” Anakin murmured quietly to her. He began running his fingers through her hair. It was soft. Softer than he remembered. “I’m not going to go anywhere.” A squeeze.

“You promise?” He could feel her need to check. Her need to be sure.

He kissed her gently on her forehead. Closing eyes as the two of them began to rock gently to some unheard melody.

“I promise.”
He needed to meet the Rebellion High Command in a few minutes and he found himself stuck, sitting awkwardly on Rey’s pillow bed. His Padawan sprawled haphazardly on him, snoring.

He shook her gently. “Rey,” he repeated. “You must wake up. I need to go to work.”

“Ungh,” was her only response. She squeezed him tighter. Refusing to loosen her vice grip on his arm and side.

Another quiet snore.

Anakin rolled his eyes, fighting a grin. He needed to do a quick change of his nutrient water and waste bags. He really needed to move.

“Rey!” He barked at her. His vocoder amplified his voice. Amused as he was, he needed to get on with his day.

She did too.
Rey jerked awake.

Her shock emanated around the room. A second or two of silence as she took in her surroundings.

“I’m so sorry,” she apologized to him. Untangling herself from his side.

“It’s alright,” he reassured her, squeezing her hand. “I just have an exciting meeting that I must attend. I need to do a couple of things first before we are to meet our guests.”

Rey cleared her throat, fighting a yawn. “Of course.”

“Did you sleep well?” He always worried she wasn’t getting enough. He knew what that felt like; how it could slowly begin to eat away at one’s common sense. One’s mind.

Rey nodded as she rolled off of her pillow bed, standing up and stretching. “I haven’t slept that well in ages. Thank you for staying with me.” Another yawn. “Did you sleep at all?” Her concern hummed gently around the two of them.

Anakin grinned. “I did as a matter of fact.” Another alert bleeped in his earpiece. He needed to get moving. “Get washed up, and I’ll meet you here in a few minutes. We will meet our guests in the hangar shortly.”

He slowly rose up onto his feet, looking around for a moment before making his way towards the medical facility to get the changes in equipment he needed.

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Anakin stood with Rey by his side, watching as the Ghtroc 720 pulled into the main hangar docking bay.

The two of them waited while the old vessel was shut down. It looked well out of place amongst the newer TIE’s and Lambda-class shuttles. Its shine no longer present, instead a permanent grime
It was a perfect fit for the Rebels. Deceptive enough to get where they needed to go, without drawing too much attention from anyone who didn’t know a damn thing about Ghtroc vessels.

It was a pity it had been flagged by the Empire.

The loading ramp noisily lowered to the floor, drawing Anakin back to the present.

He felt Rey stiffen slightly as the Rebellion High Command began exiting the vessel. He quirked his head, wondering what the issue was.

A subtle shake of her head as she stood there with her hands behind her back and her head held high.

Montferrat came to a stop next to him, waiting to greet their new colleagues. He cleared his throat. “General Draven. General Madine.” He gave both men a curt nod of his head. “Intelligence Services and Special Forces respectively.”

He was introducing Anakin to the members. Making certain he knew exactly who he was speaking with.

“Gentlemen,” Anakin greeted the men.

“General Merrick and Colonel Cor,” Jhared introduced the next pair. “Of the Alliance Starfighter Command.”

Anakin greeted the pair politely.
“Colonel Zavor of the Alliance Fleet Command,” Jhared introduced the next individual.

Anakin nodded as the Colonel greeted him before stepping aside.

General Grafis of Ordnance and Supply, and General Dodonna of Alliance Sector Command were the next to be introduced.

“And finally, General Forell of Support Services,” Montferrat finished quietly. “He is responsible for the Alliance’s transportation network.”

“Pleasure,” the General croaked out.

The last individuals to step forward were Obi-Wan, Bail and Leia. Chancellor Mothma brought up the rear.

“Chancellor,” Anakin greeted at last. He hoped he wouldn’t have to sit through yet another pissing match. Once was enough.

“Lord Vader, Commander Montferrat.” She curtsied slightly to the two of them. She turned slightly to look at Rey standing next to Anakin. “Rey of Jakku.” She gave his Padawan a small smile. Friendly, but guarded.

Anakin smirked. Obi-Wan or someone else must’ve had a chat with her.

Rey cleared her throat, masking her shock at being addressed. “Chancellor Mothma.”

“If you would all follow myself and Lord Vader,” Jhared stated to the group of newly arrived individuals. “Our conference room is just this way. There our Admirals and Officers are waiting.”

The group made their way out of the hangar, towards the turbolifts. They’d have to take two separate lifts to get everyone to the level that housed the conference room.
Anakin smirked once again, wondering just who in High Command would take the lift with himself. Wondering who had the balls to do it.

“I do hope it’s alright that we split into two groups,” Jhared said pleasantly to their visitors. “I will take one lift, Lord Vader the other. We will reconvene on the appropriate level.” He couldn’t hide the amusement in his tone, no matter how polished his words were.

Rey was snickering quietly at the surge in fear that was humming around the group.

“Sounds like a splendid idea,” Obi-Wan remarked dryly. His eyes crinkled in amusement; beard hiding his grin.

The chime of the arriving lifts interrupted anyone else from commenting.

Rey practically skipped into the lift directly in front of them. Anakin followed closely behind. Obi-Wan, Bail and Leia followed suit.

Anakin spun around, cape billowing — waiting for whomever else was about to join them.

Generals Draven and Madine stepped into the turbolift. Interesting. But, not at all surprising, given what he had recently learned of the men.

The doors closed, encasing them all in the small lift.

“Which floor?” Obi-Wan asked as he stepped closer to the control panel. Waiting for Anakin to tell him the appropriate floor to select.

Anakin grinned, focusing intently. The appropriate button lit up. He could practically see Obi-Wan roll his eyes at him.

“Show off,” the Jedi Knight muttered under his breath.

“Yes Master,” Anakin remarked, pretending to be chastised. He crossed his arms across his chest.
He couldn’t hide his amusement.

Draven slowly turned around to look closer at Anakin. A look of shock on his face. He looked back and forth between him and Obi-Wan, slowly putting two and two together.

Anakin could feel his mind whirring. Putting it all into place. Mentally checking his facts.

Draven had figured out who was hidden under the mask; who was in the suit. Intelligence specialists were known for their hoarding of information. Keeping hold of it like a soldier would a blaster. Information was their weapon of choice.

He must have kept track of the Jedi Knights in the Galactic Republic during the Clone Wars. The Knights who led their armies as they defended the Republic from the Separatists.

He and Kenobi were renowned even in the furthest parts of the galaxy.

Draven swallowed. Blinked. “Holy shit.”

Anakin snorted. “Indeed.”

The turbolift came to a stop. They had reached their destination.

Anakin led the small group into the nearby conference room where the Devastator’s Admirals and Officers were waiting.

“We have some caf and biscuits for everyone,” Montferrat said to the room as Anakin stepped in behind everyone else. He gestured over to the side of the large room, indicating a cart with the mentioned food and drinks. “Please help yourself.”

Anakin waited as the group of rebels grabbed their food and drink. Standing off to the side of the room with Jhared.

He couldn’t hide his smirk as Rey carefully inspected the biscuit in her hand. It was rehydrated
food. Much like something she would’ve seen on Jakku, just a slightly better quality.

Being a part of the Death Squadron had its perks.

She grinned slightly before placing it on a small napkin.

Anakin watched as she poured herself a large cup of caf. Mothma was standing next to her, saying something to her that Anakin couldn’t hear.

Rey chuckled quietly, nodding as she did so. She added some sweetener to her cup.

Mothma poured herself a cup before taking a cautious sip. Her shock reverberated around the room.

Rey stepped back in question, looking between Anakin and Mothma.

The Chancellor turned around, searching the room for someone. “Is this caf from Chandrilla?”

Officer Primen looked shocked at the question. He cleared his throat. “We picked this up from one of the refueling stations in the Core. The foodstuffs usually come from the Core Worlds, Chancellor Mothma. I am uncertain if the caf is actually from Chandrilla. But… perhaps,” he finished lamely.

Mothma took another sip, humming slightly. “I think it is. It reminds me of home.” She gave the officer a kind grin.

A moment or two passed as the Admirals, Officers, and Alliance guests grabbed their breakfast and settled in.

Anakin stayed standing directly behind Montferrat as he carried out the introductions of the High Command aboard the Devastator.

He let his mind wander as each and every individual was introduced to the rebels.
His and Rey’s meditation the night before went better than he had anticipated. His Padawan had been able to fall asleep shortly afterwards, and hadn’t woken up from a nightmare.

Most certainly a success in his opinion.

Although, she did insist that the two of them share her makeshift bed, he thought with a wry grin. He wasn’t certain whether that was because she was afraid of possible nightmares, or something else. Something more.

It was something to think about further.

*Perhaps I just missed you,* Rey’s thoughts whispered across their bond. She took a sip of her caf with a slightly raised eyebrow, her attention remaining on the introductions taking place.

*I missed you too,* he thought across their bond. It was the truth, he couldn’t deny it any longer.

Rey’s telltale blush crept into her cheeks once again. She hid her face behind her cup of caf. *I need to pay attention. I need to know what is going on with everything.*

Anakin grinned. *My apologies.*

Rey subtly rolled her eyes in response. A hint of a smirk on her lips.

“I think our focus should be on eliminating the second Death Star.”

Mothma’s words forced Anakin to pay more attention. He turned his focus on the Chancellor.

She was looking at him as if she was waiting for a response.

Anakin blinked. “I agree. But, we will only get one chance to take it out successfully.” A pause. “We mustn’t show our hand too early.”
They needed to wait and be certain that the weapon was in place above Endor. Assuming that was where it would be anchored as the construction was completed.

“But, how will we know whether it has arrived at the final location or not?” Captain Bolvan asked the room. “There is no way of knowing since we’ve officially left the Empire.” He was looking between Jhared and Anakin. His confusion and fear evident on his face.

“The droids we sent to the handful of vessels and the Imperial Palace are still giving me information,” Anakin informed him bluntly. Bolvan knew this, he was in the meeting when they had planned the droid distribution mission. “It is a lot of information to take in, but they have yet to be found out. The engineer was perfect in his work.” It was a pity they got rid of him.

“Do you care to share said information now?” Leia asked him quietly. An innocent expression on her face. “There is no risk to you any longer. That was what you had said earlier, when you informed us of the droids in the first place. That was the reason why you wouldn’t tell us where they were located specifically.”

Anakin narrowed his eyes at Leia. She did have a point, whether he liked it or not. His vocoder picked up his sigh.

Rey bit her lip to prevent herself from laughing at him being called out by his own daughter.

“The Imperial Palace has three droids,” Anakin began. “A maintenance droid is on the Executor.” He gestured to Officer Janak who was a ways down the table sipping his caf. “Officer Janak was able to deliver the droid successfully before I took temporary control of the Dreadnought. It is still there, gathering information.”

“The Tyrant has two droids.” Jhared picked up where he left off. “I assume they are also still gathering information.”

Anakin nodded. “They are.”

“And the information?” Mothma asked quietly. Hesitantly.
“Most of it is useless,” Anakin warned her. He grabbed his datapad that was tucked into his belt. “But, I suppose I can allow you and your Intelligence General to have access to it.” He sent her the last few weekly reports he had received. “Perhaps you will see something I missed.”

A bleep of her datapad as she received the files. Mothma gave him a curt nod of her head. “Thank you Lord Vader.”

“Have the droids given you any information about the Death Star?” Draven asked him.

Anakin hesitated for a moment. He needed to protect Rey. He needed to make certain that her being from the future wasn’t known by too many individuals. “They have indicated that Endor is most likely the base for the remainder of its construction.” A small fib, but close enough to the truth not to matter. “Of course, I received that information prior to fleeing Coruscant aboard this ship. It may no longer be accurate.”

Draven nodded in understanding.

“The Emperor informed me that the second Death Star was being moved to the new location hours before I fled,” Anakin continued. “He also stated that it was a vessel or two in the Death Squadron that was carrying out the towing.”

Jhared nodded, following along. “Well, it most definitely wasn’t the Devastator or the Executor on that particular assignment. That leaves the Avenger, Tyrant, Harbinger II, or the Accuser.”

“Assuming what he told you was the truth,” Obi-Wan stated quietly. He was watching Anakin closely. This message was for him.

Anakin crossed his arms across his chest. “I couldn’t feel him lying. But, yes you are correct Obi-Wan. The Emperor likes to stretch the truth as much as possible when it suits him.” A pause. “Tagge was also at the meeting,” he reminded Jhared. “The Harbinger II isn’t taking part in the towing either.”

“So… the Avenger, Tyrant, or Accuser?” Draven questioned the room, making certain they were all on the same page.

Anakin and Montferrat both nodded their confirmation, as did Mothma.
“Have you spotted anything out of the ordinary from your droids aboard the **Tyrant**?”

Anakin shook his head. “No. But it wouldn’t hurt for someone else to take a closer look.” He swallowed. “Same with the droids in the Imperial Palace. Nothing seems out of the ordinary to me.” It was a lot of information to look at. Far more than he expected there to be. He could’ve missed something.

“How did you get them through the security checks?” Obi-Wan asked him.

“Contracted a former engineer from Baktoid Combat Automata.” He blinked. “He was able to make some adjustments for them to be able to bypass security. He knew his droids.” It was a pity they had to get rid of him.


Anakin frowned at her question. “He was terminated after he finished his assignment.” Her shock pulsed around the room and through their bond. “As was the bounty hunter who had tracked him down on Jelucan.”

“Why would you kill someone who was helping out the Rebellion?” Her anger was now beginning to show. She was glaring at him.

Anakin focused on Rey. He shook his head. “He wasn’t helping out the Rebellion. At least as far as he was aware. He believed the droids were to be used to spy on the Rebellion, not the Empire.”

“You didn’t have to kill him!”

Anakin took a step forward, grasping the back of Montferrat’s chair. He pointed a finger at Rey. Lecturing. “Yes I did!” He placed his hands on his hips, trying to reign in his residual anger from Rey. “I don’t see you making a fuss about the bounty hunter. She died in the exact same matter. Does she not matter to you? What about Commander Karbin’s entire Destroyer full of people. Do they not matter?” He wouldn’t argue with her here. Not now.

It wasn’t the time or the place.
“But —”

“Rey,” Obi-Wan placed a hand on her shoulder. Calming her down instantly. “This is the price of war. Lives will be lost. Sacrificed.” He sighed. “I know it is unpleasant, but sometimes there is no other option.”

“They couldn’t leave a trail,” Mothma informed her quietly. “It would have put everyone on this ship at risk. I would’ve made the same call if I was in their position.”

“But —” Her lip began to wobble. Betrayal hummed strongly around the room.

Anakin blinked his eyes closed. Understanding now why she was so hurt. “There was no other choice, Rey. I am sorry.” He killed people. That was what he did; it was what he was good at.

She responded by hiding her face behind her hands. Obi-Wan was whispering something into her ear, Anakin couldn’t make out what was being said.

He frowned. Uncomfortable. Uncertain about what he should do; what he should say to make her feel better.

Mothma cleared her throat. “I will have Draven and a few of our technicians look at this information.” She gestured to her datapad. “Perhaps we can find something that will give us a definitive answer about who is responsible for moving the second Death Star. We can make certain Endor is the location.” She looked around the room. “I would think that a second confirmation on the location is vital before we make a move.”

“We don’t want to arrive at the wrong location.” Jhared nodded in understanding. “It could be a trap set up by the Emperor. I wouldn’t put it past him to pull such a thing off.”

“We also need to figure out how long it would take to tow the weapon,” Officer Janak chimed in. “It depends on where it is coming from, right? And we still don’t know that. Just the potential final location.” He frowned at Anakin. “Did you hear anything when you were on the Executor, Lord Vader?”
Anakin quirked his head. “What do you mean?"

“I mean… the *Executor* was the flagship of the Death Squadron, was it not? Wouldn’t you have known where all the Destroyers in the squadron were?” Janak shrugged. “Weren’t you keeping track of the Destroyers?”

Anakin shook his head slowly. “No. Not specifically. Not always. I assigned tasks and locations, but any one of those Destroyers could have gone off and done their own thing without me knowing.” He was only the commander of the Death Squadron officially. It was likely someone else running the show. He knew that when he accepted the *Executor* as his new vessel. Someone like Tagge or Piett.

*Ass-kissing pricks.*

The Force hummed in agreement.

“What do we do in the meantime?” Leia questioned the room. “Are there any other plans other than the second Death Star? Surely there has to be something else to do.”

“It wouldn’t hurt to take out another weapons base,” General Madine suggested with a shrug. “It tends to piss off the Empire for some reason.”

A snort could be heard from one of the officers. “Can’t imagine why.”

Anakin cracked a grin, but his focus was still on Rey. She had been able to calm down enough that her emotions were no longer affecting him.

“Does that sound alright?” He questioned quietly. The question was for Rey specifically. However, the rest of the individuals present also had a say in the potential mission.

Rey shrugged. “I don’t see why not.” Her voice was quiet. Shaky.

Her unsaid words were ringing loud and clear. She had no information on what the Rebellion had done around this time. It was far too different now that Anakin and the *Devastator* had switched
Mothma nodded. “Then I guess we can begin to plan a mission for attacking a weapons base.” She looked around the room. “Should we do that now? Or did we want to start on it tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow,” Anakin answered for the rest of the room.

“I agree,” Montferrat said. “I would like it if our troopers could carry out some drills. It has been a while since their last mission and they are beginning to get antsy once again.”

“Our pilots need to do some drills as well,” Officer Hamne informed everyone present. “Would it be alright if they carried out drills around the Destroyer?” He waited for Mothma to answer him.

She frowned slightly, before nodding. “I don’t see why not.” A pause. “I just need a few minutes to inform those at our base.”

“Of course.”

“Did you want us to aid with the patrols?” Anakin asked her. “It would help our pilots if they can get out for more than only drills on occasion.” They needed all the practice they could get.

Montferrat hummed. “We could also set up our radar. We should be able to pick up probe droids quicker that way.”

“That would be a great idea,” General Zavor stated quietly. He was watching the Chancellor closely, waiting for her final word.

Mothma nodded after a moment. “I agree with both ideas: aiding with the patrols and the radar.” She gestured to Zavor. “Perhaps you and Officer Hamne can organize something that would work for both parties. Our pilots need their practice as well.” She gave General Zavor a tired smile before turning her attention to both Anakin and Montferrat. “If that is all that needed to be covered today, did you want to reconvene tomorrow at the same time?” She waved her datapad around. “We can look at this new information and go over it tomorrow, along with rough ideas of how to take out another weapons factory.”
“Up here I assume?” Montferrat checked in with the rebels.

The chancellor frowned. “For now. Maybe the meeting afterwards we can host it.” She shrugged. “I will have to check in with everyone, get their opinions.”

“It may help to allow them to voice their opinions,” Bail conceded. “But, the call is entirely up to you, Mon. Just like the decision to give Lord Vader the location of this base was your call.” He couldn’t hide his grin.

Mothma sighed, nodding. “That is true. But, I will still ask.”

Anakin blinked in understanding. She was making certain her position as the Chancellor of the Republic Alliance was safe. He gave her a nod of his head. “Understood.” A pause. “I would like to come down with you as you return to the base. I must speak to my Padawan privately.”

Rey’s shock spiked for a moment before disappearing entirely.

“Breha and I have private quarters,” Bail responded before Mothma could get a word in. “You both are more than welcome to speak to one another there.”

Mothma swallowed. “Of course. That is acceptable.”

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Anakin took a look around the Organa’s quarters. While smaller than he was expecting, it was still relatively luxurious.

“Breha and I will be in the command centre,” Bail informed both Anakin and Rey. “Let us know if you need a ride back to your vessel.”

“Of course,” Anakin responded, not taking his eyes off of Rey. “Thank you.”

Rey had her arms wrapped around herself. Self-conscious. Uncertain.
Silent.

Anakin sighed tiredly. Wondering just where he should start.

Shaking his head he made his way into the small seating area and took a cautious seat on the couch.

“Please have a seat, Rey.” He gestured to the spot beside him.

A slight hesitation before she took her spot next to his. Still she remained silent.

“You are angry at me,” he prompted her. Waiting for her to respond.

Another moment or two of silence before she shook her head.


Oh. That was new.

“Disappointed?”

Rey nodded. “I-I thought you had stopped killing people when I came around.”

He shrugged. “For the most part, I have.” He placed his hands in his lap. “I didn’t kill you, for one. That was new for me. Especially considering you were an intruder.” He made a point of looking at her. She had a small grin on her face, barely discernible. “I only killed one Rebel above Scarif. Merely wounded the others.” He went through all that had happened between her arrival and now. “I shot a TIE out of the sky when I was above the Death Star — the fucker was aiming for Luke. Had to take them out.”

She nodded her agreement.
“I killed the commander of the *Devastator* the moment I returned from the Death Star, after it blew. Promoted Jhared on the spot as I made my way to you to get you off of the ship. To get you away from Palpatine.”

Her shock hummed gently around the room. “Why?”

Anakin looked down at his lap. “He was the one who informed Tarkin of the identity of the *Tantive IV*. I didn’t realize they were in communication with one another.” He should’ve killed him sooner. Alderaan might still have been standing if he had. “I knew he was an incompetent fool, but had no reason to kill him until then.”

“It’s not your fault,” she informed him quietly. “Obi-Wan said it was a fixed point. That it couldn’t be saved.”

He grinned sadly. “I still could’ve tried harder. I could have made it more difficult, at least. Allowed them to have more time. More possibilities.”

He blinked a few more times, thinking. “I hired a bounty hunter to find a former engineer from Baktoid Combat Automata. One of the engineers, in hiding since the Empire took control of the company, got lonely. The bounty hunter was a woman.” He shrugged. “She used that to her advantage. I paid Korraay a visit in his home and convinced him to come with me to the Destroyer that was waiting high above Jelucan. Gave him a job to do.” A pause. “When that job was completed I killed him. Disposed of him in the trash compactor.”

He watched as Rey swallowed.

“What about the bounty hunter?”

“My soldiers took care of her. She too was disposed of in the trash compactor after she was killed.”

Rey nodded sadly.

“I also ordered the *Devastator* to take out Karbin’s Destroyer. I will do it again if that is what I must do to protect my children. To protect you.” He frowned, watching her closely. “This is a war,
Rey. People will die — both good and bad. It doesn’t discriminate.”

Rey nodded once more. She cleared her throat. “I’m sorry for losing my temper in the meeting. It was uncalled for.” A quiet apology.

Anakin nodded in understanding. “It happens. But, I need you to listen to me very, very closely. Can you do that for me?” At Rey’s nod he continued. “If you have an issue with how I do things, you bring it to my attention after the meeting. Privately. Not in front of my officers. Not in front of my commander. Not in front of your Rebels. You tell me when we are alone.”

Rey looked at him with huge eyes. She swallowed before shakily nodding her head. “I’m sorry.”

“Do you understand?” He needed her to say the words.

“I understand,” she assured him. “It won’t happen again. I swear.”

He gave her a curt nod of his head. “Good.”

He reached out a hand, closing his eyes in relief when she slipped her hand in his. He gave it a squeeze. “Are we still okay?”

Rey nodded. “We are. I promise.”

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