step out into the sun

by plutos

Summary

“I gotta talk to you, buddy, real quick,” Poe says lowly, and grabs Finn’s hand to haul him back out of the mess hall. His pilot friends cheer loudly, Karé yelling something about keeping it decent, and Finn barely has a second to process it before Poe’s yanking him away and into a deserted side corridor.

“I can explain,” he says quickly, running his spare hand through his hair.

“Well good,” Finn snaps hotly, “Because I’ve had a really fucking weird day.”

Otherwise known as: Finn Is An Oblivious Numbskull, or: the one where Finn gets a name, a jacket, a droid, and a marriage out of nowhere in only a few short weeks

Notes

oh my GOD save me please just. someone. help me out here wtf is this
this was supposed to be a character study of finn figuring out where he fits in now that he's own person and then i saw a text post on tumblr and suddenly it became a fake marriage fic lmao woops

i'm so sorry that this is so long and takes FOREVER to actually get to The Thing but it was originally a character study and continues to be so, because i love finn so much my tiny bean title from imagine dragons' 'look how far we've come', even though this was written to a weird combination of one direction, hamilton, and fleetwood mac so go figure

See the end of the work for more notes
“Let me guess,” the trooper said. “FN-2187 is in charge, right?”

“That’s right.”

The stormtrooper fixed FN-2187 with a stare. “No nickname. You’re one of those.”

“One of those what?” FN-2187 asked.

The stormtrooper laughed. He looked to be in his late twenties, perhaps, but there was something hard in his eyes, and the laugh wasn’t amused. “An outsider, cadet. You’re on the outside, and you’ll always be looking in and wondering why you don’t belong.”

[...]

The problem had to be with him, FN-2187 thought. That was the only explanation. It was what everyone had been saying all along, after all. He was different. Maybe he was so different he was broken. So he could work to fix it, to be a real stormtrooper, to be one of them. That was, he thought, what he wanted most of all. Not to be alone.

(Excerpts from Before The Awakening , ch.: Finn)

The thing is, the Resistance base at D’Qar is dirty. Finn is used to spotlessness at every corner, white and chrome and nothing even an inch out of place. The walls here are rotten, filthy with slime and grot and Finn has an unhealthy desire to break out the rubber gloves and bleach and scrub, scrub, scrub until they're spotless.

Something within him tells him he needs to be doing something, anything, other than just laying here on the hospital bed. When he was a Stormtrooper he never had an idle moment. Whenever he wasn't in the shooting range, simulators, lectures, sleeping or eating he was cleaning. Sanitation, he told Solo and he didn't lie. He used to mop floors and clean dishes, and quite literally take out the trash. It's itching at him to lie here and stare at the dirty walls and not be able to do anything about it. He's never been in a hospital quite like this. Everything since he busted free and stole a pilot and a TIE fighter has been a step down in aesthetics and resources, but one hundred percent a step up personality wise and friendship wise. He sure as force didn't have any personality before the fracca on Jakku and his subsequent spiral out of his conditioning and into the hands of a rebel pilot. The best pilot in the galaxy, Poe’s voice informs him inside his head. Finn rolls his eyes. The best pilot in the galaxy is currently fast asleep and snoring, crammed into the small chair that's been dragged perpendicular to Finn’s hospital bed.

Finn’s been awake for the past half hour, staring at the grimy walls and floors instead of at Poe. He’d been waking up for short moments all day, painfully but thankfully briefly, and this is the first time he's woken up with Poe by his side. The pilot looks uncomfortable but deeply asleep, mouth hanging open and twitching, eyes running fast behind his eyelids. His hair is damp and curling against his temples, his ears, the nape of his neck. He smells of oil but his hands are clean, curled together under his chin. He looks sweet and content, cramped up as he is in the chair. It's hard for Finn not to stare.
He’s spent the first two decades or so of his life only ever seeing glimpses of folks’ faces. Everything was a sea of white and black, plastoid armour and expressionless masks. One didn’t take off their helmet without express permission from a commanding officer, unless they were eating or sleeping. Finn used to covet those moments when he could see the faces of those surrounding him. He headed a fire team of four, thrown together in simulations and moulded into a unit. FN-2000, otherwise known as Zeroes, had dark skin like Finn knew himself to have, and a lighter scar curving down his cheek. FN-2199, Nines, had icy blue eyes and bright red hair, pale skin and tiny brown dots along the bridge of his nose and the tops of his cheeks. FN-2003, Slip, had baby smooth porcelain skin and flat brown eyes to match his flat brown hair. Finn hardly ever saw his own face. He used to imagine what everyone else looked like under their helmets. White skin, brown skin, every shade under the sun of skin, of hair, of eyes. He’d learned to identify alien species in his lectures, humanoid or not, but only ever saw them in simulations until his first mission, which was really the start of the end of his career as a Stormtrooper.

Staring blankly at the walls he wonders briefly why him and not Slip. Aptly named, Slip was always slipping behind, slipping up, slipping over. He did everything one could possibly do wrong bigger and better than anyone had before him. He was the constant exasperation of his fire team, Zeroes and Nines unrelenting in their irritation and resentment of him. Finn used to do his best to help him out and up, to cover his back so he wouldn't be punished or accidentally get himself killed. Slip was useless, and Finn, back when he was FN-2187, was promising. He had been pulled up in front of his peers, singled out as a bright star amongst the identical troops. Outstanding at sharpshooting, highly skilled at hand to hand combat, a fast thinker, a good leader, and proficient in first aid. He followed the rules and completed the orders asked of him. And yet. Slip was the one to shoot those miners. Finn couldn't even put his finger on the trigger, even with Captain Phasma standing over his shoulder.

Why was it Finn who broke, not someone else? Maybe it was the tightness in his chest when the Captain told him to leave Slip behind. Maybe it was the sinking in his gut when the more experienced troopers singled him out as the outsider, never belonging. Maybe it was the burn in his heart when he saw the fear in the eyes of the miners, the sweat on the brows of the negotiators, the lack of hesitation from his comrades to open fire from less than a foot away.

Slip had given him the nudge he needed. In his last moments he couldn't help but mess things up once more, smearing his red blood over the helmet of Finn’s spotless armour.

Everything from then on was dirty, gritty, and undoubtedly exhilarating. He’d heard whispers of the pilot they’d taken as their prisoner, supposedly the darling of the Resistance, about how he could swoop through the sky like the metal wings were an extension of his own body. Finn had been desperate, heart beating too loud in his chest, frantic breath clouding up the visors of his helmet, and Poe had been right there and his for the taking. He needed a pilot, and that's exactly what Poe was. Turns out, he also needed a friend, a Poe gave him that too, along with a name and a jacket.

He’d expected Poe to be distrustful, maybe standoffish or insulting, and rightly so as Finn was rather upfront with his non-affiliation with the Resistance. But Poe had been all crinkly eyed smiles and whooping hollers as they zoomed through space in their escape, trusting Finn to be at his six and keep them safe and alive just as much as Finn trusted Poe to fly them away, out, to freedom.

Not to Jakku, that’s for sure, but Finn wasn’t the one at the helm and it was all he could do to hold on and not scream too loudly.

Watching the TIE fighter get swallowed by the carnivorous sands had been the most devastating moment of Finn’s life, worse than Slip dying practically in his arms or been ripped away from his family as a baby. He couldn’t remember his family, so that wound was practically non-existent, and
Slip had barely been his friend, merely a person he’d been in closer proximity to than any other. Poe, however, had given him a name. He’d trusted him and laughed with him and named him, given him something that he’d never been afforded by any of the other ‘troopers. He’d always been apart, slightly off to the side, never quite one of the group. Poe had given him a link, a bond, and he’d truly felt it in the brief minutes they’d been together. He’d never had a name before, not even a nickname like Nines or Zeroes, and Poe had given him Finn.

Poe had been so stunning, drenched in sweat and stumbling, bleeding from his temples and his lip, dirty hands and face. His hair curling and eyes wide, darting around the rooms quickly. Finn had never seen a face like his before, so expressive, so enticing. Everyone else, whenever they took off their helmets, had been blank and motionless, nothing like the array of emotions that play across Poe’s face like an impressionist painting. Even now, fast asleep, he’s twitching and mumbling erratically, his brow furrowing and smoothing out in turn.

Finn sighs. Of course the first time he wakes up fully the only people he could possibly call friends are both unavailable.

He’s going to have to figure out what to do. Once he’s up again, which could be quite far in the future due to the lack of resources in the Resistance medbay, he’ll have to first scrub every inch of the base until it’s spotless and gleaming, and then find out where he fits in with this absurd operation. If he fits in, even. He’s mostly sure Poe won’t abandon him, and if word reaches Rey wherever she is that he’s become homeless he knows that she’ll come raging back and hit some people with her big stick.

Poe’s still asleep, breathing softly in and out and whistling through his front teeth slightly, and the rhythm is making Finn’s eyes feel heavy. He shifts, wincing at the lancing pain that shoots down his spine. He has no idea how often people get skewered by lightsabers but he really hopes it’s a one off thing and not likely to happen to him again in his life.

His eyelids are drooping and he can feel his muscles starting to relax, his vision blinking in and out as he slips into unconsciousness.

When he wakes again Poe is still scrunched up in his seat, but alert, and grimacing at a hand held data screen. He hears a whir, and then a high pitched and frantic beeping, and Poe’s head whips around and a smile so big it crinkles up his eyes spreads across his face.

“Finn!” he cries, joy clear in his voice.

“Hey Poe,” Finn croaks. Poe scrambles around for a second and passes him a cup of water, pressing it to Finn’s lips. Finn gulsps at it, shaking at the coolness as it slips down his throat.

“How are you doing buddy? They told me you had woken up a few times while I was up in the air so I came here as soon as I could, still in my flight gear.” He grins, sheepish, leaning in to whisper. “You had conked out again and the docs kicked me out after a while to take a shower.”

“I woke up again but you were asleep,” Finn murmurs.

Poe looks crushed. “Why didn’t you wake me up?” he whines.

“You were snoring and everything, I didn’t want to interrupt that.”

He hears a chatter and chirp and the orange and white little droid rolls into his view.
“Hey Beebee-Ate,” he says softly, twitching his hand in hello. The droid spins it’s little head around in excitement and the front panel pops open, revealing the lighter from before, lit up like a miniature thumbs up. Finn chuckles. It remembers him.

Poe’s biting his lip again, like he did when he told Finn to keep his jacket, looking between Finn and his droid with soft eyes filled with fondness. Poe’s eyes are so pretty, brown like Slip’s had been but warm instead of hard and cold. He thinks for a split second that if someone asked him his favourite colour he’d say the colour of Poe’s eyes. He can’t believe that up to this point he hasn’t had a favourite colour. He’s never had a preference either way. But now there’s the lush green forests of Takodana, the vibrant orange of Poe’s flight suit, the frightening blue of Luke’s lightsaber.

“...vryone’s wanted to talk to you but I told them to back off, I’ve got dibs now that Rey’s skedaddled-” Finn tunes back in to find that Poe’s talking. Babbling really. He squints at Poe, then at BB-8, and the little droid whistles lowly and shakes its head, spinning its black viewfinder in an approximation of an eye roll.

“Dibs?” he interrupts Poe’s monologue.

“Oh yeah,” the pilot puffs out his chest. “You’re all mine Finn, and ain’t that the envy of the whole goddamn Resistance. You’re a hero, everyone wants a piece of you!”

“A hero?” Finn stutters. A what? All he did was run away, and then lie because he wanted to run away with Rey, and in the process inadvertently did exactly what was expected of him. He got knocked out of the game in what felt like less than a minute against Kylo Ren and has been fast asleep through most of the Resistance’s scrambling to get things back on track after the destruction of the Republic planets.

“But anyway Finn you helped me escape capture, flew the Millennium Falcon and Han Solo home, infiltrated the StarKiller, found Rey, and held off that dick Kyle whatever until Rey could kick his ass to kingdom come!” Poe cries, elated. His eyes are shining, bright and round.

“You think that I did all that?”

“Well didn’t you?” he shoots back. Finn has no good answer to that. Nothing Poe has said isn’t true. He did, in fact, do all that.

“Look,” Poe licks his lips. “That run I was out on when you first woke up was to receive a shipment of bacta, so you’ll heal quicker. Well,” he scratches the back of his neck, “so everyone will heal quicker, not just you. But you’re the most important to me, so.” He shrugs. There’s colour high on his cheeks and Finn thinks it’s quite pretty.

BB-8 chirps and bumps against Poe’s leg, causing Poe to shake him off and mutter something down at the droid. Finn’s gonna have to learn to speak binary and learn quick if he wants to keep up with Poe and his little friend.

“With the bacta you should be up and running again in about a week, no lasting damage,” he grins.

Finn feels weak all of the sudden. A week? He’d counted on having more than that to figure out what he’s supposed to do. The smile drops off Poe’s face at Finn’s lack of response.

“Chin up, there’s plenty to do around here. You’ve got a hoard of information about the First Order that we’ve never had access to before, I know you can shoot, and Rey said you patched up Chewie quite well in a stitch. We can definitely use you,” he assures him, eyes kind and worried.

“I can clean at least,” Finn says finally, eyeing the still grotty walls. Poe laughs like he’s said
something hilarious but Finn’s absolutely serious. He’s going to clean up if it kills him.

And that’s exactly what he does. Once his daily baths in the bacta are over and he can stand on his own two feet without Poe’s arms supporting him around his waist every time he stumbles (and mostly he trips over BB-8. He’s simply not used to droids running circles around his feet, not used to having to look down for a little whirring body chirping at him. He’s no closer to understanding binary than he was a month ago, and doesn’t that make Poe smile smugly.).

He wanders around for a few hours after his release from medbay, Poe having left him to cohort with his other pilot friends that aren’t Finn. There’s a while until lunch, and that’s when he’s aiming to start to clean. If he can befriend the cooks, then he could probably borrow some gloves and industrial chemicals and get to work. Until then, he’s got a pocket of time to peruse his new, unless someone kicks him out, home.

It’s warm and cosy, with low ceilings and lots of dust. Everywhere is a sea of brown, and it feels like Poe’s eyes are surrounding him at every turn, which would be nice, if the brown didn’t translate in his brain to dirt. He doesn’t want it to feel like he’s back on the base with the rest of the ‘troopers, sparkling white and sterile, but he’s itching to make it just a little bit more neat. He’s used to living in zero clutter, but D’Qar on the whole is one giant mess and honestly it sets Finn’s teeth on edge. He’s so happy to be here, to be free with no constraints. He wants to help and honestly right now all he can do is clean.

Poe doesn’t know that this is his plan, but Finn is feeling a little bit lost right now and he needs something familiar. He knows how to scrub and mop and wipe until things are spotless and gleaming, and maybe he won’t quite achieve that here, but it’s a nice brainless task for him to throw himself into and maybe it’ll help lift people’s spirits a bit. Folks around here need to smile more he thinks. Poe almost never stops smiling, but he’s practically the only one. All the doctors and nurses are harried and rushed, everyone Finn bumps into on his wanderings spare a nod for him but their mouths are tight lines, and General Organa is stone faced these days, drained and grieving.

There are corridors and more corridors, little nooks and crannies stowed away, heavy metal doors everywhere. The base sprawls out and accommodates at least a few hundred people and feels to Finn’s feet like it goes on forever. Luckily he’s used to marching long ways, so it’s only his back that suffers, still tender even after all the bacta they used up on him. He’d protested but Poe insisted.

It’s strange having a friend. Finn feels like he’s latched onto the first person he found, like a leech, but Poe comes to him, seeks him out, calls him by his name like it’s not the most amazing thing in the world, as if it’s ordinary. Finn can’t help but feel like he’s bothering the man, but Poe persists. They’re friends in a strange way. Finn doesn’t know a lot about Poe outside of the fact that he’s a pilot for the Resistance and whatever he’s picked up from observing Poe’s habits. BB-8 could be a well of information to him if Finn could speak binary, but he can’t, and he should find someone who’s willing to teach him, really.

Finn and Poe are friends out of circumstance, only. They went for a wild ride together, thought each other had died, and then had been pulled back together, like binary stars orbiting the same centre of gravity. If Finn had found a different pilot, even though he’d probably still have ended up on D’Qar, he has no idea if Poe would have ever noticed him, given him the time of day. That other hypothetical pilot probably wouldn’t have trusted him, wouldn’t have given him a name and laughed with joy at the explosions Finn made, even though he's probably seen and made explosions himself a thousand times. That hypothetical pilot wouldn't have told him to keep his jacket. Poe is honestly one of a kind.
He sequesters himself away in a corner of the mess hall, hunching in on himself and wrapping Poe’s jacket around his waist rather than on his shoulders. It’s guaranteed to catch people's attention, he’s learned. Him wearing Poe’s jacket always causes people to comment, to wink, to do a quick double take and raise a brow. If he wants to fade into the background then blending in with the walls is as good as it gets. Clad in his borrowed brown cargo pants that are a shy too short on him, boots that are too tight around the toe, and a black shirt that is way too tight on his shoulders, he blends in perfectly. All of his clothes have been gifted unto him by Poe, of course, but they don’t scream Property of Poe Dameron, Resistance Pilot Extraordinaire quite as much as his sand battered jacket and its giant gash that's been hastily stitched back together stretching across the back. Poe laughed as he told him the tough leather of the jacket had spared his spine somewhat from the hot blade of Kylo’s lightsaber. Finn had rubbed his fingers across the fabric and swore to himself that he'd look after it better, as best as he possibly could. He’d never had belongings of his own, and even though it's technically Poe’s, he covets that jacket more than his name even. He’d take back FN-2187 rather than give up Poe’s jacket, any day.

He gets up when he spies a little person motoring across the hall, swallowed almost entirely by a giant stack of discarded and empty trays. They're weaving back and forth, the trays threatening to topple but never quite making it. Finn follows them, clutching his own tray in his trembling hands. Time to interact with more people. You can do this, he thinks. Stay calm.

The being slides the stack of plates across the dividing tabletop that separates the kitchens from the mess hall and Finn spies his chance.

"Excuse me," he blurts and the being jumps, spinning around and staring up at him. It's definitely humanoid, just very, very small.

"I was wondering if I could… help out," he continues. The being blinks at him.

"With the… It's just a bit-" he waved his hands around. “Do you have cleaning supplies?”

The being clicks it's tongue at him, takes Finn’s tray right out of his hands, and then disappears around the divider. Well then. Okay.

Finn sighs, fiddling with the knot he's made out of the arms of Poe’s jacket around his waist. It was silly anyway, and he can live with tidying up only his quarters and leaving the rest of the base as it is. He scans the mess hall absentely but he doesn't spot Poe’s head of curly hair or the white and orange droid.

He’s bumped out of his thoughts by the little being almost running over his foot with a cart. He blinks a little, stumbling, and the being clicks it's tongue again, gesturing at the cart. It's grey and bulky but there's a mop filled with frothy water attached to the front and a tray full of sprays and bleaches cradled on the top, ragged bits of cloth for polishing tied to its sides. It's dreary and kind of low quality but it’ll absolutely do the job and Finn is overjoyed.

He laughs and reaches out to shake the being’s hand, swallowing up its tiny fingers in his palm. The being looks a little alarmed but it bows, clicks again, and scurries off. Finn squeaks a little in his happiness and wiggles, wondering where to start first.

BB-8 finds him nearly four hours later, sleeves rolled up and gloves on, scrubbing at a wall of the North corridor, humming out of tune to a song on the radio. After a bit of rummaging around the cart, familiarising himself with its limited contents, he’d stumbled across the radio and whacked the damn thing until it spit out some sound. He has no idea what language is coming from the garbled
speakers but music is music and he's happy to fumble his way through the songs.

BB-8 spins around excitedly, whizzing off and chittering, bringing Poe with it when it returns.

“Finn, buddy, what are you doing?” Poe asks, his dark brow furrowed, eyeing Finn’s gloves carefully.

“I’m pitching in,” Finn replies, smiling as wide as he can. He likes the way it makes his cheeks ache, a sensation that he'd never felt before in all his years as a ‘trooper. “This is my home now and it's gonna sparkle.”

“Well, alright,” Poe says slowly, as if he's weighing up the benefits and losses of calling Finn out on his craziness. While high on the smell of bleach he’s managed to work his way through three of the main four corridors, and is halfway through North now. He’s planning on doubling back and starting the secondary branches of the South corridors, then East then West, if there's enough time. He thinks he's done a good job, scratching off the layers of mould and finding metal hull underneath, which now, if not sparkles, at least shines somewhat.

Poe bites his lip. It's a habit Finn’s noticed he does a lot, and it turns his already pretty pink lips a deeper shade of red. Of all the colours Finn’s been exposed to since he broke out of the ‘trooper base, Poe’s are by far the brightest.

“Tell you what, you wait here, I’ll be right back. Beebee-Ate, you see if you can talk some sense into that radio and get it to play some real tunes for us, yeah?”

BB-8 gives the equivalent of a droid sigh and obediently rolls over to the radio, leaning down over it like a mother scolding its child. When Finn looks up again Poe’s already around the corner and gone. Well. He gets back to scrubbing.

Ten minutes later Poe returns, changed out of his orange gear and stripped down to the same brown cargo pants as he gave Finn and a white t-shirt, another bucket of soapy water in one hand and a pair of yellow rubber gloves clutched in the other.

“I’ll take top, you take bottom,” he grins, cheery. BB-8 squeals and Poe shoots a wide eyed glance at the droid, before nudging it softly away.

“Uh,” Finn manages. “I’m taller than you, maybe I should take the top.”

Poe frowns. It looks ridiculous on him, childlike and silly. His face doesn't suit a frown at all. He has laugh lines around his eyes for a reason, after all.

Finn shrugs, suddenly wanting with urgency to erase the frown from Poe’s face. “I’m practically bursting out of your clothes,” he adds.

Poe’s eyes widen and he glances at Finn up and down like he's taking inventory.

“Oh wow, you actually are,” he murmurs. Finn grins. Poe clears his throat at the same time as BB-8 emits a high pitched hum, bouncing like it's laughing at them.

“Okay then, I’ll be bottom,” he gives in and Finn cheers, delighted. Poe smiles at him, the kind that shows all his teeth and crinkles up his eyes, laughing like he's never been happier. Finn hands him a sponge and he chucks it into the water, sending suds everywhere and forcing BB-8 to wheel backwards sharply, protesting loudly. Finn doesn't need to speak binary to guess what it’s saying.

They work side by side for hours, folks passing by and whispering behind their hands as Poe sings at
the top of his lungs along with the radio. Finn had almost choked laughing at him, head thrown back and arms stretched wide dramatically, looking like he was completely lost in the moment. He looked ridiculous, yellow gloves dripping and soap bubbles in his hair from where Finn’s own vigorous scrubbing had landed on him.

People sometimes stopped to say hello, and one or two brave souls joined in. Namely Captain Karé Kun bellowing sharp and out of tune as she dragged her fellow Captain Iolo Arana with her, him digging his heels in all the way. Finn knew them from the stories Poe would tell him about their runs together but had never really met them himself. He couldn't help but giggle when Karé failed to hit a really shocking note and Poe, Iolo, and BB-8 all reared back like they had been slapped. Karé just laughed and continued on her way, grabbing Iolo’s hand and whistling down the rest of the corridor.

They’d finished the main North corridor, the six smaller secondary corridors that branched off South, and are well on their way through East corridor’s secondary branches when General Organa trips over them.

“Oh Poe, what are you doing?” she gasps, and Finn thinks if the leader of the Resistance was the kind of person who gaped at things then she'd be doing so now.

Poe claps his wet gloved hand on Finn’s shoulder and grins brightly at her.

“We’re cleaning,” he declares proudly. The General obviously thinks they're insane, looking between them and BB-8 like the droid could have somehow talked sense into them, but her eyes soften somewhat.

“And why’s that?” she asks, looking like she's settling in for a long conversation. That makes Finn feel a bit hot under the collar, because he's only ever spoken to her once and that was when he was caught up in the adrenaline of things. Now he finds he's rather nervous.

“I’m not entirely sure, ma’am, but Finn was doing a great job and looked like he was having a jolly lot of fun, so I joined.” Poe’s still grinning.

The General shoots him a wry look.

“Fine, Commander,” she spits like she’s enjoying it.

Finn was fine while her attention was on Poe, but now her eyes are settled squarely on him and it's definitely unnerving. She's so small but she commands so much space. She, like Poe, sucks all the air out of the room just by being in it. Or at least that's what it feels like to Finn.

“Well carry on then,” she says finally, turning on her heel. Finn lets out an audible sigh of relief.

“And I expect to see you in the shooting range, Mr. Finn,” she calls over her shoulder, causing him to tense up. “I want to see what you can do besides making things jolly clean.”

Finn’s left stunned, blinking as she turns the corner and disappears. Poe claps his hand down on his shoulder again, leaving a soggy imprint on the fabric.

“She likes you,” he whispers and BB-8 whistles in agreement.

“You think?”
“For sure. She called you jolly.”

Finn’s face must be doing something funny because Poe laughs, scrunching up his nose. His eyes are shining. He bites his lip again.

“I’m going to get some snacks,” he announces, and then he's bounding down the hall like a bunny on a speedster.

BB-8 coos after him fondly, spinning around and peering up at Finn.

“Who even says jolly these days?” Finn asks the droid. BB-8 jumps and rolls into Finn’s knee over and over, chirping.

“Yeah, Poe’s pretty jolly himself,” Finn agrees absently, patting BB-8’s smooth metal head.

Poe comes back with water bottles and packages of the discs of sweet food that Rey likes so much jammed in his mouth. He skips down the corridor, drops his haul at Finn’s feet, then tugs him down to sit cross legged on the floor next to him. They have a picnic right there in East corridor, listening to the radio burble jazzy music and trying to catch flying pieces of what Poe explains to him are called biscuits from BB-8’s metal arm extension. Both Finn and Poe are useless at it, but Poe manages to successfully catch one once and almost smothers Finn in the enthusiasm of his hug.

In those moments Finn forgets all his worries and lets himself get caught up in Poe and all his wonderful colours.

Finn covers most of the base within a week. He spends his mornings chiselling layers of grit off the walls and then polishing, wolfs down a quick lunch and immediately starts bleaching everything in sight. Soon the entire place starts to stink of chemicals, which Finn has become entirely immune to but which others most certainly have not. They wrinkle up their noses as they pass by, but it also has the added effect of getting them to look up from their data readers and actually take in how clean everything is now. Finn’s received more than a few shoulder pats from passing personnel and every now and then someone stops to tell him how nice it is to have a bit of spring cleaning going, how refreshing it is to see shiny metal instead of dull mud.

Poe always joins him after dinner, with his little droid rolling behind him. After the first time he always shows up out of his flight gear, one white t-shirt after another, with a bright grin as he slops soap suds everywhere. Poe must have some sort of tracker on him because he manages to find Finn wherever he is, even when he's crammed into the tiniest, dingiest spaces on the base, scrubber in hand and bleach bottle clutched between his knees.

They work together for hours, Poe singing charmingly along with the radio and BB-8 adding its own trills and high notes whenever it feels like it. Finn’s not quite ready to go bellowing down the corridors like Poe is but he thoroughly enjoys watching Poe put on a show. Poe always brings sandwiches, or that inflatable bread stuff that Rey hates, or occasionally biscuits and crisps to keep them going. Once he brought a tube of purple slimy stuff that he sucked into his mouth in one smooth gulp. Finn had followed his lead, a little tentatively, and the flavour had exploded over his tongue like nothing he’d ever tasted before.

For two decades of his life he’d had the same bland meals day after day, nutritious but hardly tasty. Living here at the Resistance base is like living at a food market. They have all sorts of beings wandering about with all sorts of different dietary requirements and local specialities, so a kind of undercover black market where you can trade food for food and try something new has sprung up
around them. Poe’s never mentioned it but Finn’s seen it go down, hunched over as he does in the
mess hall, blending into the walls. People don’t notice him there and he gets to observe all sorts of
behaviour. He desperately wants to trade for some new food, something exotic and sweet, or tart and
sour, something he’s never tasted before, but he has no food of his own. Poe brings him everything
and the mess hall provides three meal tickets per day and that’s all.

When Finn decides to call it a day, he and Poe tip the dirty water in their buckets down the drain and
go fill up a new one. BB-8 pushes the bucket and Finn and Poe dip their mops in and methodically
wipe down the floors of every corridor from med bay to mess hall, swiping up the dirty shoe prints
and little bits of mess that people inevitably leave in their wakes.

Poe chatters incessantly and it’s so easy to get caught up in his wild stories. Once Finn almost
snapped his mop in half he got so excited at what Poe was saying. It’s so effortless to bounce off of
Poe’s enthusiasm, his wide eyed wonder at everything, his zest for life and everything that comes
with it. Finn’s never been allowed to express himself like this before and it’s like breathing in clean
air for the first time in his life, filling up his lungs with sweet oxygen and feeling it rush through all
his body.

When people see him with Poe they’re far less likely to come up and chat. They walk past and wink
rather than interrupting Poe’s story, which Finn thinks is nice. He likes to listen to Poe’s voice and
watch the way his face and hands move, so expressive. When people see him in Poe’s jacket they
clap his shoulder or shake his hand, telling him he’s doing a great job, to keep up the good work
because everybody’s benefiting. He’s still wearing all of Poe’s clothes because neither of them
having gotten around to informing anyone that Finn needs a bigger size. It depresses him a bit
because when he puts Poe’s clothes on in the morning they smell like the pilot, like motor oil and
sweetness, but by the time he’s done scrubbing at the walls and floors all day they just smell of
bleach.

He doesn't usually see Poe during the day, since Poe is either training with his squad or out on a run
somewhere, patrolling the skies and picking up supplies. No one’s sent him on any proper missions
recently, Poe’s told him in a dejected sort of voice, because they're all still scrambling for order after
the Republic planets went up in smoke. Finn doesn’t like to think about all the people that died that
day, all the people on this base who would have died if Finn hadn't found some guts at the last
second.

Once Finn was polishing one of the doors to yet another branch of small dingy corridors when Poe
came strutting down the hall in his orange flight suit, helmet under his arm as BB-8 under his feet, his
friends Jessika and Snap flanking his sides. They were laughing and skipping, Jess leaning over to
poke Snap in his sizeable belly while Poe giggled when they spotted him. Poe almost dropped his
flight helmet in his haste to rush to Finn, tackling him into a big bear hug. Poe’s arms always come
up from underneath him, wrapping snug around Finn’s waist like he's going to lift him clean off the
floor. Finn loves Poe’s hugs with every fibre of his being. He’d never been hugged before Poe.

“We’ll leave you two alone, shall we?” Jess had called, snapping a sloppy salute in their direction.
Poe had rolled his eyes but kept his arm wrapped around Finn’s waist. Snap pretended to take a
picture with his fingers, cooing that they were so adorable, BB-8 whistling in an approximation of a
laugh.

“They’re just jealous that I don’t run and jump at them in corridors,” Poe had whispered in his ear,
winked, and then swaggered off to join his friends.

“He’ll see you tonight for your date!” Jess called, and yelped as Poe smacked her lightly around the
back of the head.
That stuck in Finn’s head for some reason. Snap pretending to take a picture reminded him that he doesn't have any pictures of anybody, nothing to look at and smile. He has his own memories, but all the good ones have happened very recently. He’s acutely aware that any time Poe goes up in the air could be his last, and desperately wants a photo of him smiling just in case he forgets what it looks like.

He mentions it to Rey when she vids him that night. She calls when she can, which is about every other day, and after she's done checking in with General Organa that Luke hasn't flung her off a cliff and expected her to use the force to stop her fall she always calls Finn. Rey always has so many stories to tell about all the things she's getting up to with Skywalker, everything she's learning that she can do, and she recounts it in a breathless sort of voice with her eyes shining. Finn tries to soak up every second of her in these moments, missing her terribly, even though they’d only known each other for a day. Like Poe, their friendship was born from a near death experience. Unlike Poe, his first impression of her was to run away, terrified that she'd knock him out with her stick. Finn gets the feeling that Rey doesn't trust easily, having been alone for so long surviving in that horrible desert on Jakku, so he's so proud that she persists in being his friend.

“You could probably make a camera,” she muses as she munches on some sort of dried fruit.

“Out of what?”

She rolls her eyes. “There are scraps everywhere, Finn, you just have to look.”

Finn peers around his quarters, which are small and empty. He has a bed and a desk, a metal rack full of empty hangers for his nonexistent clothes, and a sink in the corner with a mirror above it. The only things that show a person lives there is the folded up pair of pyjamas Poe gave him on his pillow, his boots by the door and toothbrush on the sink, and Poe’s jacket, draped over the desk chair.

“Maybe your room isn't the best place to start looking,” Rey gently pokes through his train of thought. “Ask Poe,” she says decisively. “Or even better, ask Beebee-Ate.”

Finn moans. “I still haven't picked up a word of binary.”

“When I get back I’ll teach you,” she promises.

Finn perks up. “When you get back? When are you getting back?”

Rey winces. “Not for a good couple of more months. There's so much to learn, and I’m still so new at this, and Luke is a great teacher and I want to learn everything I can from him,” she says all at once in a rush.

Finn’s chest feels tight, but it's not like he was expecting her to say, oh I’ll pop back home tomorrow.

“Keep your mind busy. Build the camera, put in some shooting time at the range like the General suggested, find someone to teach you binary. Time’ll fly Finn, it always does.”

“I thought it only flies when you're having fun,” he says petulantly, pouting.

“Well, aren't you having fun?” Rey retorts.

And Finn actually… is. His life now is so far from what he was doing over and over as a Stormtrooper, the same things every day with no emotion. Now he gets to look at people’s faces, eat food that actually tastes like food, laugh at Poe’s bad jokes and warble along with the songs on the radio. He’s never done anything like this before, never been allowed to, never even wanted to. He couldn’t miss something he didn't know existed, but now he's doing it, he can never imagine going
back, not for anything. He has his freedom now, and he's enjoying it with an enthusiasm he honestly didn't know he was capable of.

“I think I am?”

“You sound unsure,” says Rey carefully.

“I definitely am,” he confirms, thinking about Poe’s loud laughter and BB-8’s dizzy whistling.

Rey grins, the dimple in her cheek popping beautifully. She’s so sweet and lovely, and when she smiles it’s like the sun emerging from behind a giant cloud. Poe smiles all the time, and so Finn does too, can’t help it when he’s around him, and whenever Rey flashes him a grin it’s automatic for Finn to return it giddily. His chest feels bubbly, knowing that his best friends are happy.

“So now you have a plan,” Rey nods decisively.

“Find parts for a camera, build the camera, put in some time at the range, and learn binary. Quite a full schedule,” he grins.

“I’ll be back before you know it,” she waves. “May the force be with you, Finn.”

Now he’s finished cleaning and is relatively happy with the overall state of the base, he gets straight on with the little to-do list Rey and he had come up with. He’s just on his way to find Poe, meandering down the corridors that lead to the giant hangar bay and the runways outside, when the General loops her finger in the collar of his jacket and drags him sideways.

He yelps, flailing and confused, but General Organa keeps up her quick march and hauls him down a narrow passageway. He can hear the hasty stitches Poe had put in along the back of the jacket to hold it together starting to snap and twists around to bat at her fingers without thinking. She shoots him an unimpressed look but drops her grip on him, silent and expectant, and Finn mutters an apology as he hobbles to keep up.

“Mr. Finn, did I or did I not say I wanted to see you in the shooting range some time soon?” she questions as she types in a code to the door to what is presumably the shooting range.

“I- Well-”

“And did I not say that over a week ago?” she tuts.

“I just-”

“What’s your surname?”

“My what?” Finn asks, dumbstruck.

“Your surname,” she repeats. “The name that comes after your first name. I am Leia Organa, that over there is Calebo Crane, and next to them is Endo Magoro. So what’s yours? For the log book, you see,” she explains and gestures to the notebook with people’s names scrawled in.

He can see now that all of them have at least two names, if not more. He spies Poe’s name among the lot, the Dameron after it, and feels a little lost. He’s only got Finn, nothing else.

The General hums at him, eyes narrowed shrewdly, and just writes down ‘Finn’.
“We can get you a surname after, once we add you to the service personnel and set everything up for you. Don’t think I haven't noticed you're borrowing Poe’s clothes.”

Finn feels his skin get hot, fingering the hem of his Poe’s shirt.

“The whole damn base has noticed,” she mutters and Finn’s head snaps up. He thought he was blending in. He’s been wearing the same clothes as everybody else and yet still manages to be an outsider. His heart sinks.

General Organa thrusts a blaster gun at him.

“Chop chop, I haven't got all day,” she motions for him to stand in the right place and points at the paper figure at the end of the room. Finn squints. Is that-?

“It's in poor taste, I know,” the General sighs. “But they're all we have I'm afraid. Aim for the chinks in the armour, I'm sure you know exactly where to hit.”

Finn’s arms feel a bit heavy but he swallows and raises the blaster until it's aimed where he wants it. He breathes out slowly, relaxing his shoulders, and squeezes the trigger. The blast hits the Stormtrooper right in the black of its stomach.

“Fantastic,” the General cheers. Finn had almost forgotten she was there for a second. The other two people in the room stop to clap and Finn blinks a bit, startled, but smiling. Okay then.

He shoots off more rounds with the blaster gun, not a single one going where he doesn't want it, and the General switches the blaster with a bowcaster, then a ray gun, a ray rifle, and a long range proto blaster. Out of the hundred rounds he shoots, 98 of them are dead on the mark.

“Hell yeah!” he whoops, caught up in the elation of the feeling.

General Organa claps, smiling in a way that makes her look decades younger. She’s so dainty, like Rey, he thinks. Her hair is all braided and pinned up and her eyes are the loveliest shade of brown, like Poe’s but darker.

“What a great job, Mr. Finn. With your experience in breaking in and out of places you'll make a fine Pathfinder.”

Finn feels the corner of his mouth twitch pleasantly. His chest feels like it's expanded to accommodate something new, a bit more pride in his abilities. The General thinks he can fit in here, that he has a place and things that he's good at that will benefit the Resistance. He suddenly wants to find Poe and tell him everything, tell him how great this is, how he's on his way to being somebody, a true and proper person, someone who can help.

“Of course, right now we’re still trying to sort out how the Republic is going to be run, so you'll be grounded just like everybody else,” she sighs. Finn’s giddiness pops like a balloon. There's something he's found he can do, but can't quite do it yet.

“I can do first aid,” he blurts, desperate to be useful.

General Organa stops where she's disassembling the guns and putting them away in their proper places.

“Emergency first aid or simple patching up?” she asks.

Finn ducks his head. “Both. I was pretty good at it back when… Well, you know. And I patched up
Chewie just fine even though we were being flown through space like we were on a roller coaster, not a freighter, and he kept trying to kill me.”

General Organa cracks a smile. “He’s pretty feisty isn’t he?” she laughs.

“I’ll tell you what, you can shadow some of the nurses for a few days, get a feel of how things run in our medbay, and if you’re happy then we’ll put you down as emergency services until you can hit the ground as a Pathfinder, how about that?”

That sounds perfect to Finn. He must be glowing because he feels like his skin has just popped up a thousand little light bulbs all fervently burning in their happiness to finally have a place.

“That would be so great, I won’t let you down,” he gushes, wiggling a little on the spot.

The General smiles gently up at him, eyes fond and soft. “I have no doubt in my mind that you won’t,” she says firmly, and turns on her heel to leave.

“Uh- General?” he calls after her hesitantly.

She comes to a halt and peers round at him, face open. Finn decides to just go for it.

“You don’t happen to know anyone who’ll be willing to teach me binary, do you? It’s just,” he shuffles uncomfortably, “Poe’s always got Beebee-Ate with him and I can’t understand a word the little thing says and I really want to learn so I-”

“I get it,” she says gently, putting up a hand to stop his babbling. She smiles like she knows something he doesn’t. “I can teach you,” she continues, “if you’ll do something for me in return.”

“Anything,” he promises, stunned.

“You can meet me after hours in the staff room with the squishy chairs, do you know the one?”

Finn nods aggressively. He knows the one. Poe likes to drag him there and sit with him, tell him stories as Finn hugs the cushions. He’s never felt anything so soft before in his life, other than the worn out leather of Poe’s jacket.

General Organa nods at him like she’s decided something important, but Finn’s too giddy to care what.

“Stop in at the medbay and find Dr. Kalonia, she’ll set you up with a data reader so you can study up and assign you some trial shifts to get started. I’ll see you later,” and she’s gone.

Finn stands staring into the air for a moment, before scurrying off to the medbay as he was told.

Poe finds him hours later, completely sucked into the data reader in his hand and surrounded by crumbs from the sweet biscuits he’d eaten rather than get up and go to lunch. BB-8 beeps loudly and zooms over, almost knocking Poe down with the force of its enthusiasm.

“Buddy! Hey, we’ve been looking for you,” he exclaims, draping himself over Finn and digging his chin into Finn’s shoulder. His breath is hot on the bare skin of Finn’s neck.

“What’s got you all holed up? Folks’ve been asking to see you, you know, and I hate to disappoint them. What’s all this?” he reaches out and pokes at the data screen.
“It’s my itinerary for next week, I’m gonna be shadowing some nurses in the medbay.”

“Well shit, Finn, if you were looking for things to do you could’ve come to me! I’d’ve been happy to set you up with something.”

Finn shrugs shallowly, not wanting to displace Poe from where he’s plastered against his back, but Poe squeezes his shoulders and moves away. Finn puts the data reader down, sighing, and turns to look at him.

“Why’re you so serious all the sudden, pal? What happened to the Finn who was whooping and hollering in a stolen TIE fighter, huh?” Poe asks, a concerned crease between his eyes. BB-8 coos and Poe shushes it, keeping his eyes fixed on Finn.

“That Finn was high on adrenaline from a very near death experience,” he explains.

“High?” Poe waggles his eyebrows. “We can get you high again, I’m sure one of the other pilots has something around…”

“I’m not taking your space drugs!” Finn all but yelps, and BB-8 beeps loudly and headbutts Poe’s shins, hard. Poe doesn’t even flinch through his laughter.

“Yeah, what they said,” Finn nods to BB-8.

“How do you know they weren’t saying my space drugs are the jam?” Poe quips. His eyes are practically sparkling with mirth, his smile stretched wide across his face.

Finn grumbles darkly, still sore that he can’t speak binary yet. BB-8 reassures him by firing up its lighter like a thumbs up again, and Finn reluctantly smiles, shooting a thumbs up back to it.

“But really, what’s up?”

Finn drags his attention back to Poe, stood there in the low light in his orange flight suit, hair damp with sweat and eyes fixed on him. There’s a million other things he could be doing right now, but he’s stood here next to Finn, asking him if he’s okay.

“I’m just,” he scrubs a hand roughly through his short hair. “I’m just trying to find where I fit in. With all this, you know? It’s hard, I’ve never had to decide things for myself before, I’ve never had to think about what I want to do. And now I’m kind of… lost.”

Poe stares at him for a second, before the look in his eye becomes determined. He holds his hand out to Finn, wiggling his fingers, and Finn takes it, slightly confused because Poe’s not said a word. Usually it’s hard to get him to shut up, a total motormouth he’d heard Jess call him. Not that Finn would ever want Poe to be silenced. He enjoys listening to his voice, soft and feathery, and all the stories that he tells. He likes hearing his name fall from Poe’s lips, liked it the first time and every time since. So it’s a bit disconcerting to him that the pilot isn’t saying anything now.

BB-8 lets out a series of high pitched beeps, spinning itself in tight circles around their feet. Finn realises they’ve been stood there holding hands for a little while now, and when he looks up Poe’s biting his lip again, like he’s seen him do it so many times before. He smiles, his teeth pressing down on his bottom lip harder for a second, and when he lets go there’s little indentations left behind, slightly redder than the rest of the flesh. Finn always notices when Poe’s colours change.

“Come on, buddy, let’s find you a place,” he winks and starts to walk out of the room.

Finn trails behind him, their hands still connected. Poe’s hands are large, with thin fingers covered in
calluses from flying. He’s told Finn that he repairs a lot of the damage to his X-Wing himself, so his fingernails and skin almost always have smudges of oil clinging to them. Rey’s hands were rough, from the sand Finn guesses. Poe’s hands are strangely soft, if you ignore the calluses. Finn’s seen him moisturise them after pulling off his flight gloves with his teeth. He doesn’t know why he does it, but he sure appreciates it now, his fingers twined with Poe’s so closely.

Poe leads him to a window in the wall where a bored looking Dressellian sits, hunched over to accommodate its enormous size.

“We need like, all the forms,” Poe announces, bouncing on his toes. BB-8 whistles and bounces too, making a clanging noise that echoes off the metal of the walls. Finn’s scrubbed his way through this room before and is pleased to see that it’s still shiny.

The Dressellian blinks at Poe’s grinning face, then at Finn, and shuffles off to find forms, whatever they may be.

“You couldn’t be more specific?” he hisses at Poe. Poe makes a gesture with his hand like he’s calming him down, shushing him.

“He knows who you are, don’t worry,” and while Finn’s feeling a little alarmed at that easy statement the Dressellian comes back and slaps down a small stack of datapads. Poe scoops them up, asks if there’s a stylus they can use, then steers Finn over to where the Dressellian points its long finger to. He plucks a stylus, clicks it on and off a few times to check it’s working, and then drags Finn over to a pair of seats in the corner.

“Now,” he says, spreading the datapads out on his thighs. “We’ll start with the easy info first, stuff like your name and your birthday, and then move on to the harder stuff, okay?”

Finn nods blankly, and takes the datapad and stylus that Poe presses into his hand. There’s a blank space on the pad where he’s to write his first name, any middle names, and a surname. He carefully prints out ‘FINN’ in capital letters and then scrolls down to fill out another question.

“Woah, hey buddy, you’re just gonna go with Finn?” Poe questions.

Finn shrugs. “I don’t have another name,” he says lowly. BB-8 whistles a sad sounding sigh.

“Well now you can choose one! Go on, any name in the galaxy and it’s yours. Go ahead,” Poe smiles, dazzling.

Finn stares quizzically down at the datapad. Any name in the galaxy. He wonders, briefly, what his family name would actually be. If his parents had picked out a name for him when he was born, after a relative or chosen for its meaning. But it doesn’t matter now.

He slowly, carefully prints out ‘DAMERON’ in his neatest handwriting. When he’s finished, he looks up at Poe’s face, hoping it’s okay. Poe’s biting his lip, his hand clenched on his thigh, knuckles white. BB-8 beeps loudly, and Poe’s face breaks into a beautiful beam, like his mouth can’t contain his joy.

“I’d be glad to have you,” he says softly. His eyes are affectionate and Finn feels warm all through his body.

He fills out his species: human, as far as he’s aware. Current address he fills out with the base’s coordinates. Previous addresses he leaves blank because what the hell is he supposed to write? Oh yeah, I lived on a First Order Star Destroyer for the majority of my life, but let’s just forget about that forever shall we? He wishes he could forget.
He gets to date of birth and looks desperately up at Poe.

“What?” Poe peers over at the datapad. “You don’t have a birthday? Wait, you don’t have a birthday?” he repeats. His mouth has dropped open in a perfect O, slack jawed as he is in his surprise.

“Buddy, you’re missing out. Birthday’s are the best.” BB-8 whirs its agreement.

Finn looks dryly between the droid and his friend. “I wouldn’t know, having never had one and all.”

Poe rolls his eyes. “Well choose one then, and we’ll throw you a big party.”

“Can we put a hat on Beebee-Ate?” Finn asks, biting the inside of his lip. Poe throws his head back in laughter making his curls bounce as BB-8 beeps a series of loud protests and rolls furiously into the legs of their chairs, chirring in its annoyance.

They both giggle for a good minute, Poe with his nose scrunched up adorably. This is a moment that Finn would want to photograph, if he had a camera. For now he lets his chuckles die away as he clicks the on/off button on the stylus over and over.

“I don’t know what day to choose,” he mumbles.

“Okay well,” Poe starts, rubbing his mouth. “I don’t know if you guys used it or not where you come from but we’ve got a brand new calendar system now. Year 0 used to be set at the fall of Palpatine, but the New Republic Historical Council changed it to the destruction of the Death Star at the Battle of Yavin, so now everything’s shifted to BBY, Before the Battle of Yavin, and ABY, After the Battle of Yavin.”

Poe’s eyes have gone a little hazy, lost as he is in his explanation. Poe knows so much about everything that happened, and his point of view is so different to what Finn’s always been told. He was conditioned from the bias of the First Order, whereas Poe’s parents were part of the original Rebellion and fought through the war. Poe’s grown up surrounded by the Republic and the Resistance, has wanted to be a pilot in order to fight the Dark Side since he was six years old. Finn used to watch the propaganda videos the First Order rolled out about how the populations were suffering under the hands of the Republic, how they were going to help bring order to the galaxy and rid it of the government that wanted to quash its progress. He feels dirty, squirming on the inside, that he ever used to believe any of that bullshit.

“There’s five days in a week, seven weeks in a month, which makes up ten months in every year. The first day of the first week is called first Primeday, then the second day is first Centaxday, then first Taungsday, first Zhellday, and first Benduday. When you move into the second week it becomes second Primeday, and so on and so forth. We’re in year 34 ABY now, the third month, and it’s the fourth Primeday, so you could put that down if you wanted.”

Finn licks his lips. “What was the date when I met you? I mean, I broke through my conditioning and started on this whole crazy journey so that seems, kinda, significant?”

Poe nods like he’s proud of him. His lips curve up. He reaches out and puts his hand on Finn’s knee, palm warm over the fabric of Finn’s borrowed trousers.

“It was the seventh Zhellday of the second month, 34 ABY,” he says slowly, pronouncing every word like it’s precious. “Of course, you weren’t actually born in the year 34 ABY. Do you have any idea what kind of age you are?” he wonders, as if he’s thinking out loud.

Finn draws his eyebrows together and thinks hard. He must have seen it in a file somewhere. Then
again it wasn’t often he got to look in his own file. Classified, of course. The number 23 pops into his head, unbidden, and he decides to roll with it.

He does the mental math and prints ‘MONTH 2, ZHELLDAY 7, YEAR 11 ABY’ carefully on the datapad. Poe fake punches him in the shoulder.

“Nearly a decade younger than me,” he grins wolfishly.

Finn perks up. “Oh yeah, old man? When’s your birthday?” he asks, unable to stop himself.

“Watch it kid, it’s coming up soon! It’s the fourth month, second Benduday, year 2 ABY,” he clicks his fingers like they’re miniature guns. BB-8 trills happily below them, feeding off their enthusiasm.

“I expect a surprise birthday party,” Poe continues.

“How can you expect a surprise birthday party if it’s a surprise?”

Poe rolls his eyes and BB-8 beeps like it’s laughing. “Stop being a smart ass and get on with filling out the rest of the forms,” he grouses, but his eyes are crinkled up at the corners.

They spend the next half hour or so with their heads bent together, trying to fill the forms out as best as they can. It turns out that Finn knows next to nothing about himself, which isn’t surprising, so most of the spaces on the form are left blank for lack of a better option. He thankfully knows all his medical information, having just been sprung from the hospital and all. In the space for Defining Characteristics Poe writes ‘Charming Smile’ and Finn adds ‘Mole on Left Buttock’, making Poe choke on thin air.

They finish up as best as they can and hand the datapads back to the Dressellian who grunts at them and waves them away, its huge brown wrinkled hands creating a gush of cool air that makes Finn blink rapidly. Poe says something in Dressellese that makes the guy crack a smile. Finn really needs to get on with learning some new languages if Poe’s gonna be walking around and switching it up at the drop of a hat. Which reminds him: he needs to meet General Organa soon.

He peers at the big clock on the wall, a rectangle with panels that flip over automatically with the passing seconds, minutes, and hours. He’s got enough time to grab a quick meal, return the data reader to Dr. Kalonia, and mop the floors before he has to meet her after hours.

Poe’s chattering away alongside him, almost skipping absently as he throws his hands about enthusiastically, BB-8 rolling loyally by his side and making strings of beeps occasionally.

“I thought you could sit with me and the other pilots tonight,” Poe’s saying, turning his body towards him and spreading his hands in a hopeful gesture.

Finn bites his lip. “I’m not planning on eating for long,” he says, “I’ve got things to do.”

Poe’s shoulders droop and his hands drop back to his sides, sliding into the pockets of his orange flight suit. “Of course, of course, another time then.”

“Tomorrow, for sure,” Finn promises earnestly, and Poe looks so elated that even his curly hair perks up.

“It’s gonna be so great, buddy, everyone’s been dying to talk to you properly. I kept telling them to back off and give you a little time but they keep pestering and nagging me, begging to talk to you.”

“What, seriously?” asks Finn, dumbfounded.
“Of course!” Poe crows. “Why would I lie? You’re the talk of the entire base! The General’s so tight lipped about Rey and Skywalker that no one has anything new to gossip about but you. Plus, you’re awesome, but I already knew that so it’s not like it comes as a surprise that you’re all anyone can talk about.” He slings an arm over Finn’s shoulder, surreptitiously standing on his tiptoes to reach. “You and me, pal, we’re hot commodities,” he winks.

“Oh, because standing on your tiptoes is so cool,” Finn teases.

“Hey!” Poe shakes his shoulder and flicks his hair, pouting. “It’s not my fault you’re taller than me. Pick on someone your own size.”

Finn laughs, bubbles bursting in his chest. He feels so happy he could fly. He’s only ribbing Poe a little because it’s fun to trip up the pilot’s swagger, and Poe knows that Finn think’s he’s the coolest thing in the world aside from Rey.

Poe drops his arm so it’s around Finn’s waist and slumps back down to flat feet and his hand worms it’s way into the pocket of Finn’s- Poe’s - jacket. Finn wraps his own arm around his friend’s waist in return, fingerling the bunched up elastic of Poe’s flight suit. They walk down the corridor side by side, BB-8 following behind like it doesn’t want to interrupt.

Poe holds his waist all the way up to the door of his quarters, before fishing his hand out of Finn’s pocket, somehow looking awkward as he leans against the door.

“Well,” he starts, flexing his hands on his thighs.

“Well?” Finn echoes in question, a bit confused.

Poe’s eyes dim a little before he clears his throat and opens the door, tapping BB-8 over the threshold with his boot.

“You’re all signed up now,” he says with his head down, eyes on the droid. “As soon as your trial period is over in the emergency services you’ll be added to the official personnel rota and receive a paycheck.”

“I get paid?” He didn’t think he’d be getting paid anything. Maybe he can buy a camera, and some things to put in his room, things that will be his. He can use the money to buy food to trade for new food, things he’s never tasted before. He’s looking forward to being officially a part of the Resistance even more now.

“Yeah buddy, go as wild as you can on the scraps we get thrown. It’s not like I’m in it for the paycheck but man, budgets are tight, so don’t expect anything much.”

Finn hadn’t been expecting anything, so any amount of money is exciting to him.

“I’ll see you for mopping later, yeah?” Poe looks up at him through his eyelashes.

Finn’s brain stops working for a second. “Uh, yeah. Wait, no, I can do it myself, no worries,” he stutters. That was a weird moment, he thinks. He wants to keep his lessons with General Organa a secret for the time being, so he can surprise Poe and BB-8 later.

“What are you keeping from me?” Poe’s eyes narrow, his brow furrowed, looking at Finn playfully with only a hint of genuine suspicion.

“Nothing,” Finn says innocently, hoping the tingling in his cheeks doesn’t show on his face.
Poe hums, obviously not convinced.

“I’ll find out sooner or later,” he croons, laughing. He reaches out and claps Finn on the shoulder, then turns into his room and closes the door.

Finn stands there for a minute, though he doesn’t know why. He hears a thunk that could be BB-8 hitting something come from the other side of the door and almost knocks to find out if the droid is okay, before dismissing the notion as silly and carrying on down the corridor.

He’s got lots to do, and as much as he wishes he could spend all his time with Poe, he’s realistic enough to recognise when a dream is just a dream.

He’s early to his meeting, as Dr. Kalonia let him keep the datareader she’d given him and sent him on his way, calling that she’d meet him bright and early tomorrow in the medbay. When he pushes the door open to the room the General had specified he can see she’s already sitting on one end of the purple squishy sofa, cross legged, holding something in her cupped hands.

“Ah, Finn,” she gestures for him to approach. He does so hastily, settling down a respectful distance away from her on the other end of the sofa. She rolls her eyes and scoots closer, opening her palms up and revealing what’s hidden in them.

“This is Penny,” she says softly.

In her palms is an absolutely tiny droid, about the size of a baby bird. It’s shaped like BB-8, but is dark blue and has little white dots all over its body.

“Designation P-E-N dash E,” the General continues. “She’s an engineering astromech, they use them to get to the places where hands can’t reach.” She points to the dots along its body. “These are for grip, so she can climb up walls without falling off.”

The little droid beeps quizzically, staring up at him with a wide black lens.

“She?” Finn asks, eyes fixed on the droid. PEN-E clicks on a flashlight on and off near its lens and whirs slowly, rolling in the General’s palm.

“She insists,” laughs the General and PEN-E beeps along with her.

“She’s for you,” and the little droid spins around again to peer up at Finn. General Organa motions for Finn to hold his hands out and then tips the droid into his palms. It’s body is cool on his skin, and it’s heavy, and Finn is completely enraptured.

“She’s unfortunately defective. Can’t tell a wrench from a spanner,” PEN-E interrupts by beeping loudly, spinning her head around to stare down the General. “She’s incredibly sweet though, so none of the engineers were willing to send her for repairs. She’s very fond of humans. You’ll get on well, I think.”

Finn strokes a fingertip over the top of PEN-E’s head. PEN-E rolls into the gesture, making a series of mashed up beeping noises, and proceeds to roll her way up Finn’s sleeve and onto his shoulder.

“This is so great,” he murmurs. His own droid. Hopefully they’ll bond like Poe and BB-8 have. And she’s even small enough to fit in his pocket, so he can carry her around everywhere if he wanted. If she lets him.
“I’m glad,” the General smiles. “The more you converse with Penny, the faster you’ll pick up binary. Now,” she pulls out some datapads and stylus’ from her pocket. “I don’t expect you to suddenly become fluent just because you’ve got your own droid now. We’ll be learning the basic binary alphabet, and Penny will help you learn which sounds signify which words. You’re already able to pick up the general context from what tone a droid takes when speaking, correct?”

Finn nods. “I can tell when Beebee-Ate is sad or happy, or when they’re mad, even.”

“Does Beebee-Ate get mad often?”

“Poe and I like to tease them sometimes. But I won’t,” he hurries to assure PEN-E, who’s perched on his shoulder like a little bird, inspecting the side of his face. “I won’t tease you, I promise,” he says earnestly.

“You and Poe make quite a pair,” the General murmurs under her breath.

“Partners in crime,” Finn jokes, smiling widely. He likes being associated with Poe. Having other people recognise their friendship just makes it feel more real to him.

“Partners in something, that’s for sure,” she sighs, and Finn doesn’t understand, but lets it go. She hands him a datapad filled with zeroes and ones, and starts to explain the binary alphabet, teaching him gently how to put strings together and correcting his mistakes. He can hear the whir of PEN-E’s lens zooming in and out to read what’s on the datascreen, and while at first he was distracted by the little droid’s weight and presence on his shoulder, it eventually becomes soothing background noise.

He fills in page after page of exercises in binary until he’s starting to get most of the answers right. It’s both simplistic and complicated to base an entire language around only two different letters, or numbers, he should say. His hand gets tired of printing out zeroes and ones pretty quickly, his eyes blurring and his mind often losing track of where he is and what word he’s on, but then PEN-E will beep encouragingly and he finds it within him to carry on.

“Not bad,” the General says after about an hour of exercises. “I’ll send over some more for you to complete before we meet again next week. In the meantime Penny can help you learn the different sounds- oh, wait. You don’t have an individual personnel account yet, do you?”

Finn smiles. “Actually, I just set one up today,” he says proudly.

“Well let’s find you then,” the General winks and pulls up personnel records on her datapad. Finn’s brain scrambles for a second, suddenly realising that the leader of the Resistance and actual royalty Leia Organa is going to read that he has a mole on his left buttcheek.

“Finn, Finn, Finn… Ah, found you. Finn… Dameron?” her voice goes up at the end and she turns to look at him, her eyes amused.

“Well,” he shifts uncomfortably. “Poe said he was glad to have me and I just… Wanted to be official, I guess.” To belong properly, he doesn’t say. To not be alone. To have a home. To be a real person.

“This is certainly official,” she hums.

She scrolls further down the page. “Charming smile,” she reads out, and then eyes Finn carefully. He can feel his skin go hot on his cheeks. “I’m not going to argue with that,” she says simply and carries on scrolling.
She finally comes to the end of the document and puts her datapad down, sighing. “Lots of blank spaces, Mr. Dameron,” she teases.

Finn almost chokes on his spit. *Mr. Dameron*. He’s *Finn Dameron*. Now he hears it out loud it makes the oddest feeling explode in his belly, and he ducks his head to hide whatever emotion is playing across his face. He can hear PEN-E chirping something and the General laughing in response.

“I think that’s enough for today.”

Finn looks up and the General has already risen, elegant as she is, and is looking down at him on the sofa.

“Look after Penny for me,” she says, and the little droid warbles happily.

“Thank you,” he replies sincerely. “You really didn’t have to, General, but thank you.”

“Leia, please,” she smiles at him with kind eyes. Finn’s chest feels tight.

“General,” he insists. There’s something within him that just can’t call her by her first name. Too much respect, too much history, maybe. She’s a legend. He couldn’t possibly reduce her to just Leia.

She laughs brightly. “You take your cues from Poe, I see. Alright then, Mr. Dameron, I shall see you at the same time next week.”

And then she’s gone, leaving Finn in stunned silence on the squishy purple sofa. PEN-E beeps hesitantly, twirling her head around to look up at him. Finn hastily picks her up and cups her in his hand, leaning in to whisper.

“You and me are gonna be spending lots of time together.” PEN-E rolls backwards a little, looking up at him quizzically. He can hear the mechanical whir of her lens zooming in on his face. He tries to smile reassuringly.

“I’m nice, I promise.” PEN-E chirrs in response, high pitched, and then spins her head around to look at the door and then back to him.

“Yeah, bedtime, I think,” he whispers.

He’s reluctant to leave the softness of the sofa, but the lure of sleep is too high. With his datareader in his pocket and PEN-E in his palm he sets off for the door. On his way out, before he can think too hard about it, he swipes a soft cushioned pillow for PEN-E to sit on. He knows the charging socket is above his desk and wants her to be comfortable while she catches the droid equivalent of sleep. It’s bright pink and fluffy, and when Finn dangles it in front of PEN-E’s lens she makes a bright sounding chirrup which Finn takes as approval.

“I’m Finn, by the way,” he says to her when he gets to his quarters, setting her down on the pillow and leaving her on the desk. She spins around on the pillow, exploring its texture, before turning to him and whirring slowly.

“Finn,” he repeats, pointing to himself and PEN-E makes the same whirring noise, starting low and ending high.

He laughs, delighted. PEN-E whirs it again and again, until she can say it as fast as he can. He reaches out and pats her little head and she buzzes under his palm, happy.
He starts to get changed into the pair of pyjamas that Poe lent him. He wonders absently if, now that he’s on the personnel roster, he’ll be assigned his own clothing. He’d like to keep one or two items of Poe’s, he thinks. Poe’s sewn his name into the labels on his shirts and on his socks too. Finn likes to rub his fingers over the letters when he can’t get to sleep.

“Okay, next name,” he announces as he pulls the sleep shirt over his head. It’s a faded blue colour and on the front there’s a logo of a restaurant Finn’s never been to, a cheery The Best in the Galaxy! scrawled in loopy yellow font across the chest. Poe must have had it some time because the picture is cracked like it’s been through the wash over and over.

“My best friend, she’s called Rey,” he says and repeats her name carefully. PEN-E stares up at him for a moment before whirring out a slightly different string of sounds.

“That’s it,” he encourages. “Rey. She’s not here right now, so you won’t meet her for a while. She’s training with Luke Skywalker. She’s going to be a jedi, the best jedi in the galaxy.”

PEN-E beeps excitedly and flashes her torch light on and off. Finn laughs.

“You like that?” he asks, and PEN-E rolls around in tight circles, buzzing loudly. “She’s the coolest person ever, and she’s my best friend. She’s gonna come back and show me how the force works. I don’t know much about the force,” he says, thinking of Solo’s indignant face framed by the fluffy lining of his snow jacket. He sighs. PEN-E beeps curiously, bringing him back to the present.

“But I did use a lightsaber once, do you know what that is?” He presses his fists together like he’s holding the handle of Luke’s lightsaber and swishes it around, making a zooming noise with his mouth. PEN-E squeals, little lights flashing on her blue body. Finn laughs.

“It was blue, like you,” he smiles and PEN-E rolls forward so fast she drops right off the pillow.

“You’ll like Rey for sure then,” he mumbles and PEN-E repeats the sound for Rey’s name enthusiastically. He shuffles over and picks her up, placing her back on the pillow. She vibrates and bumps against his fingers.

“My other best friend is called Poe,” he whispers. “He’s a pilot, and he’s got a droid just like you, but bigger and more orange. Poe and Beebee-Ate.”

PEN-E trills out a soft noise. “Poe,” repeats Finn gently. PEN-E whirs lowly, again and again, and Finn smiles.

“Now, Beebee-Ate,” he says, and PEN-E beeps in what must be the binary for the other droid.

“Finn, Rey, Poe, Beebee-Ate, and you’re Penny,” he whispers. PEN-E beeps and rolls herself across the pillow over to the socket.

“You’re right, time to sleep,” he sighs, padding over to the bed in the corner and climbing in, pulling the blankets up to his chin. He listens to PEN-E powering down and closes his eyes.


He turns and punches the pillow, trying to get comfortable. He needs to talk to more people, he decides. What had Poe said about everyone wanting a piece of him? That he was all anyone could talk about. Well maybe they could talk to him rather than about him.
He’s only really heard stories from Poe before. Rey’s still tight lipped about her history, and he’s never actually spoken to Skywalker, relying on Rey to tell him about the man. Since he can’t speak binary yet he’s never managed to have a full conversation with a droid, not even C-3PO, who spends most of its time following General Organa around and talking to itself. Han Solo is dead, and so is Slip. He doubts if he’ll ever speak to any of the remaining members of his fight team, considering Nines had been the one to call him a traitor and get shot by Solo.

He’s never going back to the Star Destroyer. He wants to stay as far away from Kylo Ren as possible. He still has dreams about the unstable slice of Ren’s lightsaber, the way it seemed to spit and hiss, fizzling and shaking. It was hot and cold at the same time, burning his skin. He rubs the spot on his shoulder where Ren had pushed the lightsaber into him as he screamed, trapped against the rough bark of a tree. There’s a scar there, lighter that the rest of his skin, to match the scar that drags all the way across his back in a smooth swoop.

He shakes himself out of his reverie, stretching for a minute to try and move the tenseness out of his limbs. Thinking about these things just before he goes to sleep leads to bad dreams. He knows from experience. He tries to think of nicer things, happier things, that will hopefully inspire pleasant sleep.

He thinks about what Poe’s face will look like when Finn shows him PEN-E. His eyes would go all wide and his mouth would drop open, Finn knows. He’d probably call PEN-E ‘buddy’ and BB-8 would beep indignantly and they’d all laugh.

With the thought of Poe’s smiling eyes warming his heart, Finn drops off to sleep.

He wakes up groggy but well rested the next morning. Slamming his hand against the data reader on the desk tells him that he’s got fifteen minutes to get ready to meet Dr. Kalonia in the medbay and he groans lowly, loathe to get out of bed so soon after waking up.

He swings his legs onto the floor, hissing as his bare feet touch the cool concrete, and scrubs at his eyes. He forces himself slowly through the motions of pulling his pyjamas off, and fetching some clean clothes from the dwindling pile in the corner that Poe had given him. When he pulls that day’s black shirt over his head it smells of Poe, of his friend’s sweet scent and motor oil, cocooning him in familiarity and safety. He splashes some water across his face in an effort to be more alert and brushes his teeth quickly.

He’s just jamming his feet into Poe’s borrowed boots, which really pinch his toes and he’s reminded again to find out if he’ll get his own items of clothing soon, when he spies PEN-E sitting atop of her cushion, still powered down and plugged into the wall. He shrugs Poe’s jacket on, thinks for a moment, before reaching out and tapping on her metal head with his knuckles. Nothing happens. He tries again, a little harder, but still she is silent and motionless, not even vibrating.

“Penny,” he whispers. “It’s time to wake up, Penny.” He taps her again. Nothing.

He straightens up, hands on hips, and contemplates how best to go about this.

“If you don’t wake up I’m going to leave you here while I go visit Rey and Luke Skywalker,” he threatens, and PEN-E bursts into life, chirring shrilly in a strange combination of the sounds for Finn’s name and Rey’s, plus some more beeps that he doesn’t understand.

He chuckles. “I thought so,” he scoops her up and deposits her safely in his jacket pocket. “I’d like to sleep all day too, but there’s work to do, so don’t be so stubborn next time, okay?”
PEN-E lets out a sad whine, burrowing into Finn’s pocket and not coming out for the entire journey to medbay.

It’s quiet when he arrives, people shuffling about and trying not to make noise. Finn can’t blame them. It’s so early that his eyes haven’t even adjusted yet, so he’s left squinting in the fluorescent white light that pervades the medbay. He spots Dr. Kalonia standing with a humanoid in blue scrubs and hurries over to her, not wanting to give a bad impression if it turns out that he’s a couple of minutes late.

“Right on time,” she smiles at him and he sighs in relief. He needs to get a watch.

“This is Azul Ferran, the nurse you’ll be shadowing today. Ferran will sign you in and you can start your shift in doing some stock intake for us, and when someone comes in that needs tending to Ferran should come and fetch you and you can learn how we do things from him.”

Ferran nods his head in Finn’s direction, and Finn hastily nods back. The man has almost entirely white eyes, like that of an Arkanian, and it’s slightly freaky for Finn to look at. He’s so used to Poe’s warm brown eyes that Ferran’s seem cold and distant in comparison.

Dr. Kalonia leaves them then, winking at Finn, and strides off to check on someone in a secured room. Perhaps they’re in a coma, like Finn was, separated from the rest of the ward. A medibot whizzes past and almost clips Finn on the elbow and he turns to glare at it.

“Hm,” Ferran reaches out and touches the stitching on the back of Finn’s jacket. “This will have to go. It definitely doesn’t look hygienic. I think there’s some scrubs in your size somewhere…” he mutters and Finn scowls. He gets the feeling that Ferran is insulting his taste in clothing. Finn’s fashion sense is just fine, thank you. His jacket is one of a kind and belonged to the best pilot in the resistance so Ferran can shove it.

“Name?” Ferran huffs impatiently. He’s got a datapad and stylus in hand, obviously wanting to sign Finn in as fast as he can and then get rid of him.

“Uh, Finn,” he replies. Ferran raises an eyebrow. “Finn Dameron,” he clarifies. He’s hardly used to having his own first name, let alone a last name, so it’s strange to hear it come out of his own mouth.

“Dameron?” Ferran repeats, thick eyebrows raised high on his forehead, making it wrinkle. “As in, Poe Dameron, Black Leader?”

“That’s the one!” Finn says cheerily, smiling genuinely.

“When did this happen?” Ferran’s eyes are wide and intense, staring at Finn like he’s suddenly the most interesting thing in the galaxy, whereas before he couldn’t have cared less.

Confused, Finn slowly replies, “Last night?”

Ferran sighs heavily. “Kids these days sure do move fast, don’t they? But I suppose it’s desperate times, so I can’t really judge. Is he happy?” he questions.

Finn is now even more confused. He reaches into his pocket and strokes the top of PEN-E’s head, hearing her burble nonsense noise, and it calms him down a little.

“I think so? He smiles a lot, if that’s what you’re asking.”

Ferran hums slowly, looking Finn up and down like he’s evaluating his worth.
“As long as he’s happy. Poe’s a favourite around here, so don’t go treating him wrong.”

“Poe’s my favourite too,” Finn hastily assures him.

“I would hope so,” Ferran says cryptically, before returning to his datapad and scribbling something on the screen. “Sign here,” he says and thrusts the datapad and stylus at Finn, who fumbles to catch it, the stylus spinning in his butterfingers. He looks around and shrugs, pretending like he’d meant to do that.

There’s a dotted line where he’s to sign, but Finn’s never had to sign his name before, so he has no idea what to put. Ferran’s tapping his foot impatiently, so he quickly scrawls ‘F. DAMERON’ as neatly as he can, handing the datapad sheepishly back to Ferran.

“I’m not quite used to the new name yet,” he explains, feeling shy.

“I’ll bet. If it only happened last night then no wonder. Well, it’s official now. Finn Dameron, welcome to the team,” Ferran says pleasantly, and Finn smiles, surprised at the kindness in Ferran’s words.

Ferran has him change into a pair of blue scrubs and Finn surreptitiously fishes PEN-E out of his jacket pocket and deposits her in the pouch at the front of his scrubs, along with his datareader and a stylus. He sets to work documenting the inventory in the cupboards of the medbay: which supplies need topping up, what they need desperately and what they can probably wait for. He moves and shifts things around, finding medicine in the wrong draws and returning it into the correct ones, placing everything in standard alphabetical order until he knows where everything is like the back of his hand. Slow and methodical, he takes his time and makes sure everything is perfect and fully accounted for. He doesn’t want to screw up on his first day and be back to square one, with nothing to do and no place to belong.

He can see Ferran scurrying around out of the corner of his eye, whispering to all the other nurses and pointing unsubtly in Finn’s direction. The nurses always look at him, raise their eyebrows, and then giggle with Ferran, before running off and finding someone else to giggle with. He figures it’s just folk gossiping inane things about him, like Poe said.

Only a few people come in that morning, and all with minor injuries. Ferran fetches him every time and slowly walks him through their treatments, which would be nice if Finn didn’t get the feeling he was being patronising on purpose. Ferran always introduces him too, pointing and saying, “This is Finn Dameron,” and the patients always reply with, “Oh? When did this happen?” and Ferran always winks at Finn and whispers, “Last night.” The whole thing is very confusing.

He takes his lunch break and shrugs back into his black shirt and jacket, careful to take PEN-E with him. The little droid had been happy to whizz about the stock room with him, beeping and whirring, but now seems tired, so Finn strokes her head and smiles down at her as she vibrates. What’s weird is that as he walks down the corridors, people smile at him and call out. Usually they just walk past, buried in their datareaders, or just stare at him as he walks by. He gets a thumbs up from a podgy looking man in engineering gear, hands covered in black oil. Finn bemusedly gives him a thumbs up back and the man chortles.

He takes his jacket off when he gets to the mess hall, tying it around his waist as he always does in an effort to blend in. Finn is used to eating his food in silence, and while he’d love to sit and chat to Poe, their meal times never seem to line up. But still, he stands out. People keep on coming up to him and shaking his hand. “Finn!” they cry, “Finn Dameron! Congratulations!” and Finn smiles and nods and pretends like he understands what the hell going on.
His whole day from then on is just plain weird. He sits and contemplates seriously about whether he’s slipped into a new dimension, a parallel world maybe. Could he get Rey to use the force to change everything back? That would be nice, he thinks, as another person claps his shoulder and whoops in his face joyfully. He doesn’t like being left out of the joke.

He’s drained by the time he clocks out, and leaves the medbay, a small chorus of “See you tomorrow Mr. Dameron!” and “Say hi to Poe for me, Mr. Dameron!”’s echoing behind him. He slumps back to his room and tips PEN-E out of his pocket and onto the floor, crouching down to pat her on the head affectionately.

“I’m going to take a nap,” he says to her slowly. “And when I wake up, hopefully things will be less strange.”

He shrugs off his jacket and places it carefully over the desk chair, then flings off his boots and wiggles his toes, which ache from a long day of being shoved into shoes the wrong damn size for his feet. Exhausted, he lets himself flop face down onto the bed. He hears PEN-E beep curiously and turns his face to see her halfway up the wall, staring at him.

“What the-” he starts, flailing a hand out to tap against the datareader on his desk which obediently tells him the time.

“Oh shit, is it dinner time? I promised I’d meet Poe,” he rolls out of bed and jams his feet into his borrowed boots, not even taking the time to complain about the way they pinch his toes, and grabs his jacket off the chair, lifting PEN-E up as he pulls it on.

“Now you be good, yeah? Poe’s my best friend, and I want you two to get along.” PEN-E lets out a miffed beep, like she’s saying, *excuse me? I’m always nice*, and Finn huffs out a short laugh before scooping her up and sliding her into his pocket. She whirs the sound for Poe’s name over and over, spinning her head around to look up at him.

“You and me both, buddy,” he replies nonsensically, and then he’s out the door and hurrying to the mess hall.

He nods quickly at the handful of cheers and cries of his name that are flung his way as he rushes down the corridors, but he doesn’t have time to stop and chat. It confirms to him though that he’s definitely still trapped in this weird world where people keep congratulating him for no real reason and he resolves to whine to Poe about it until it goes away. Misery shared is misery halved, right? Or at least he thinks so.

He spots Poe right away in the mess hall, his head of curly hair standing out to Finn in any room, and he’s leaning lowly over the table and hissing something to his pilot friends. It’s Jess who spots him first, and she whoops, shaking Snap’s arm and pointing excitedly in his direction. Poe’s head whips around and his eyes widen, but a smile appears on his face like always.

“Finn!” he cries, and suddenly the entire room of people is staring at them and jeering. Finn, at this point, is completely lost and starting to fray at the edges, meeting Poe’s gaze and hopefully begging
with his eyes for an explanation.

Poe hurries over and clasps his hand firmly around the back of Finn’s neck, dragging him in for a quick hug, but he’s pulled back before Finn can even raise his hands to return it.

“I gotta talk to you, buddy, real quick,” he says lowly, and grabs Finn’s hand to haul him back out of the mess hall. His pilot friends cheer loudly, Karé yelling something about keeping it decent, and Finn barely has a second to process it before Poe’s yanking him away and into a deserted side corridor.

“I can explain,” he says quickly, running his spare hand through his hair.

“Well good,” Finn snaps hotly, “Because I’ve had a really fucking weird day.”

Poe winces, his grip on Finn’s hand increasing a fraction. “Okay,” he licks his lips. “I’m just gonna come out with it. Okay?”

Finn nods, impatient. “Okay,” Poe repeats again, but his eyes look strained.

“We’ve established that it’s okay, so please just get on with it, whatever it is,” Finn says slowly.

“Everyone thinks we’re married.” It comes out in a rush, all at once, and Finn has to repeat it several times in his mind for the words to sink in.

“Everyone thinks we’re what?” he yelps, and Poe quickly claps his hand over Finn’s mouth to stifle the noise, smiling stiffly at an officer as they walk past.

He squeezes Finn’s hand, and Finn squeezes back twice as hard, making Poe wince.

“Would you just chill out?” he hisses and Finn raises his eyebrows, looking down to where Poe’s hand is still clasped over his mouth. “Oh, sorry,” he mutters, taking his hand off and running it through his hair again.

Finn takes a deep breath. “Why does everyone think we’re married?”

“Because last night you put your name down as Dameron, and everyone knows we spend a bunch of time together, so they just assumed,” he looks stressed. “I don’t know, okay? Gossip travels fast on a base like this, and you didn’t exactly clear it up for anyone.”

“Excuse me, all anyone was doing was calling me Finn Dameron, which is my name, how was I supposed to know?” he huffs.

Poe stares at him for a second, eyes wide, and then laughs. “Finn Dameron. Well I’ll be damned. It suits you, you know?”

“Well I’ll keep it then, shall I?” Finn quips. Poe laughs harder and Finn is helpless to resist joining in, bending his head close to Poe’s and sharing his joy.

They sober up quickly, though, their laughter dying out.

“What are we gonna do?” he asks, hoping his friend will have all the answers. All Poe does is drop his hand and start pacing, making tight turns and not saying anything.

“The thing is,” he sighs. “The thing is, I’ve never seen the base this lively before. It’s really, weirdly, boosted everyone’s morale.” He stops and peers at Finn with an unreadable expression on his face, before resuming his pacing.
“So you’re saying we should just go along with it, so we don’t disappoint everyone?”

“Well yes, exactly, sort of.”

“That was concise,” Finn snorts. PEN-E beeps in his pocket.

“Oh, shut up- wait. What was that?” he asks, looking confused. PEN-E beeps again. “That- did you hear that? What was that noise?”

Finn sheepishly reaches into his jacket pocket and lifts out PEN-E, cradling her in his palms. “Poe, meet Penny,” he says softly, and the droid spins around to train her lens on Poe’s face, whistling the noise for Poe’s name slowly.

Poe looks delighted. “I’m Poe, that’s me, oh my god Finn, it’s adorable,” he gushes. His eyes are bright and the smile on his cheeks are pushing the corners of his eyes into little crinkles.

“She,” Finn corrects, but he’s not even sure if Poe hears him, cooing as he is as PEN-E. PEN-E rolls forward onto Finn’s fingertips and Poe places his hands out, palms up, for her to roll onto.

“Oof, she’s heavy,” he grumbles but he’s still smiling widely. “Aren’t you a clever girl?” he murmurs and PEN-E beeps loudly, flashing her lights on and off in excitement. She whirrs and whistles, chittering what sounds like nonsense to Finn, but Poe laughs ecstatically.

“What’s she saying?” Finn questions eagerly, wanting to join in.

“She says she is a clever girl, and she resents you telling her to be on her best behaviour around me. I’m sure you’re always good, aren’t you?” he pats her little head and she spins around happily, making little buzzing noises.

“She’s lovely, Finn, where did you get her?”

“General Organa gave her to me. I’m trying to learn binary,” he explains, scratching the back of his neck. “The General’s teaching me and Penny’s supposed to be helping, but all she’s done most of the day is sleep.”

“You didn’t say you’re learning binary! Buddy, that’s so great!” he crows, reaching out and placing a hand on Finn’s shoulder.

“It was going to be a surprise,” Finn shrugs ruefully.

“So that’s what you were keeping from me,” Poe drawls. “I told you I’d find out sooner or later,” he sticks his tongue out at Finn, which Finn can’t let go unnoticed, and so sticks his own tongue out in reply.

Poe giggles, scrunching up his nose. “We’ve gotta introduce this little guy to Beebee-Ate,” and PEN-E beeps loudly at that, obviously excited.

“I think maybe we should sort out the other situation first?” Finn gestures between them.

“Huh? Oh, yeah, damn,” Finn sighs. He bites his lip, looking up at Finn from under his eyelashes. “So What’d’ya say? Wanna stay married to me for a bit? We’re already best buddies, it can’t hurt to get a little closer,” he winks.

“You’re not the one who’s gonna be stuck married to you,” Finn groans, already giving in.

“Is that a yes I hear? Come on, Finn, you gotta say it. Do you wanna be married to the best pilot in
the galaxy?”

Finn silently says goodbye to his sanity. “Yes,” he sighs, and Poe whoops loudly, punching the air and pulling Finn in for a close hug. They both forget that he’s still holding PEN-E and only her frantic beeping prevents her from being dropped unceremoniously on the floor.

“This is gonna be so great buddy, everyone’s gonna be so buzzing and we’ll receive great gifts and get to hold hands all the time,” he babbles. Finn beams indulgently, feeding off of Poe’s excitement. Poe’s almost vibrating in his giddiness, bouncing on his toes and staring up at Finn with wide sparkling eyes. How could Finn possibly deny him anything?

“Come on,” Poe clutches Finn’s hand again, still cradling PEN-E and dragging them both back into the mess hall. “I wasn’t joking when I said the guys were excited to meet you.”

Finn’s chest suddenly fills with nervous dread, but he keeps his eyes on Poe, who’s smiling widely and and striding into the mess hall with all the confidence in the world, their hands joined together. Poe’s wearing another one of his white t-shirts and the muscle of his biceps strain as he tugs Finn along behind him. Finn focuses on the shade of Poe’s skin, warm brown like his eyes, to stop himself from shaking with nerves. He wants Poe’s friends to like him, and it’s even more important now that they’re pretending they’re married.

Force above, what the hell has Finn gotten himself into?

Poe’s pilot friends stir up a racket when they reenter the mess hall, drumming their hands on the table and stamping their feet. Everyone’s staring at them. Finn feels his face heat up, but Poe just squeezes his hand and pulls him forward.

Jess stands up and shushes everyone, rubbing her hands together and smiling widely. “I’d like to introduce,” her voice booms across the room for everyone to hear, “Mr. and Mr. Dameron! Everyone give it up for the happy couple!”

The room erupts in deafening cheers. A couple of people walking past stick their heads into the room in confusion. Finn kind of wants to melt into the floor.

“Alright, alright, shut the hell up, all of you, mind your business,” Poe commands, but he’s got a silly grin plastered on his face. Finn bites his lip and holds onto Poe’s hand tighter, feeling like his skin is too tight. He doesn’t know how Poe’s smiling as naturally as he is, but it makes him feel a lot better to see his friend seemingly happy.

They settle down onto a bench on one side of the table and Poe carefully tips PEN-E onto the surface and watches her whizz around, exploring, with that silly grin still tugging at his lips. With all of Poe’s pilot friends gathered on the other side of the table Finn feels like he’s at some kind of awful interview. They’re all looking between him and Finn with eager smiles on their faces, apart from Iolo who seems more interested in his pot of strange gloopy looking stuff to pay any attention to Finn and his imminent death at the hands of his fake-husband’s best friends.

“I can’t believe you went and got hitched and didn’t invite any of us,” Karé shakes her head.

“It was kind of spur of the moment,” Poe explains, sheepish. His eyes are big on his face and he’s pouting at his friend across the table. It’s very convincing, Finn thinks. Poe squeezes his hand where they’re still joined between them under the table.

“Here,” Jess says, and pushes a tray filled to the brim with brightly coloured packages and steaming hot food across the table. “We put something together for you. I pillaged my own stash of goodies
for this, so you better be thankful.”

“Mashed potatoes,” Poe whispers in awe, digging eagerly into a pile of white fluffy stuff and moaning in ecstasy. PEN-E beeps, peering inquisitively at the stuff on the tray.

“What’s mashed potatoes?” Finn asks before he can stop himself.

The table falls silent. Even Iolo stops scooping up his gloopy stuff to stare at him.

“You’ve never had mashed potatoes?” Snap gasps.

“Oh my god, Finn, you’ve been deprived.” Karé insists, grabbing Poe’s fork from his hand and shoving what’s left of the mashed potato into Finn’s open mouth.

He struggles for a second before the taste registers and he swallows in surprise. It’s smooth and creamy, like nothing he’s ever tasted before. Everyone’s staring at him in anticipation, including Poe, who doesn’t seem mad at all that his food and fork have been stolen and shoved into someone else’s mouth. They’re married, or fake married Finn guesses, so sharing stuff is supposed to be normal, right? Poe’s a good actor. He didn’t make a sound of protest; he didn’t even blink.

“It’s good,” he says finally, handing the fork back to Poe, who shoots him a dashing smile and goes back to happily eating from the tray.

Karé nods like she’s satisfied with his answer and gestures to the rest of the tray. “There’s a Datooine flapjack in there somewhere,” she says.

“And I put in the last of my stash of Whip Towers,” Jess adds, and Finn nods, pretending he knows what the hell a Whip Tower is.

“Have a Gorba melt,” Snap says, pushing a blue package towards him. “I nicked them off the Falcon before she flew off.”

“I wish I could fly her some day,” Poe sighs wistfully. The others make noises of agreement. Finn doesn’t mention that he’s already done it, and that it was kind of a shitty ride overall. Having the gun jam on you, and then almost dying from poisonous gas, only to then nearly get eaten by a carnivorous Rathtar was not his idea of a fun time.

Jess rolls her eyes and elbows Snap. “Why are we talking about freighters when we could be talking about the beautiful and inevitable union of our Commander and the Prince Charming who saved his life, hm?”

“There’s really not much to say,” Poe insists and then his eyes go wide and he chokes on a groan, grimacing. Jess is smirking across the table. Finn has a sneaking suspicion she probably just whacked him in the shins.

“Let your husband speak for once, would you?” she chides, and turns to Finn.

“Um,” he manages, “Poe’s right, it was nothing interesting.” He shoots a wide eyed glance at Poe who winks at him and squeezes his knee. In the excitement of the mashed potato he’d let go of Finn’s hand, and it’s only now that Finn notices how cold his palm feels without Poe’s settled gently next to it.

“Look at that loyalty,” Karé shakes her head. “It’d be admirable if I wasn’t so annoyed that I wasn’t invited to the wedding. Honestly, we’re gonna have to throw you a proper bash to make up for it, or even have you redo your vows so everyone on the base can hear ‘em.”
“Were they beautiful?” Snap bats his eyelashes.

Jess snorts. “Knowing the Commander they were poetry. You know what a giant softie he is.”

“A true romantic,” Iolo pitches in, and Poe blushes a pretty pink high on his cheeks.

“You don’t think it’s a bit soon?” Karé asks, and Jess smacks her around the head.

“No,” replies Finn automatically. He knows Poe better than he knows himself, trusts Poe with his life. He has no doubts when it comes to his friend.

“Really?” comes Poe’s voice from his side and when Finn turns to look at him he’s biting his lip again.

“Really,” he says firmly, reaching out and squeezing Poe’s thigh the same way he’d done to him earlier. Poe beams at him, and it’s like sunshine is pouring out of his skin and warming Finn’s whole body up. He wants, with a sudden fervour, to take a picture of this moment.

“Aw,” Snap coos, clutching his heart. Karé pretends to wipe a tear from her face, turning to Iolo and whispering, “That’s the kind of love I want, just look at them.”

“You two are gonna be disgustingly cute, aren’t you,” Jess states flatly. “Just for that I’m taking back my Whip Towers. I need compensation in advance for all my teeth falling out from all your sugary sweet love clogging up the air.”

Finn’s chest feels tight. He’s suddenly hit with the knowledge that he’s never been in a romantic relationship, let alone kissed anyone. He doesn’t know how to be disgustingly cute, or even if Poe expects that from him. But he knows in his bones that Poe would never push him into doing something he didn’t want to do, or wasn’t ready for, and steels himself for an awkward conversation about his complete lack of experience in these matters.

PEN-E beeps and rolls gently into his hand, like she can sense that he’s wandered off into his own head and wants to bring him back. Karé’s currently wrestling Jess’s hands off some brightly coloured packages, telling her that she donated that food, that it’s a present for the happy couple. Poe’s laughing softly, reaching out to absently pet PEN-E as she rolls past to inspect the discarded wrappings on Snap’s tray.

“Who’s this little guy?” the pilot asks.

“This is Penny,” Poe says proudly. “She’s Finn’s,” and he shoots a grin in Finn’s direction.

“Already adopting kids?”

Jess snorts. “Poe comes with a child already. Where is Beebee-Ate, by the way?”

“They’re in the command room, waiting on Rey’s transmission,” Poe explains.

Finn perks up. If Rey’s vidding the base at the moment then she’ll be calling Finn soon. Poe obviously notices his interest and rolls his eyes fondly.

“Take what you want from the tray, you can take it back to your room and chat to her now if you want.” Finn tamps down on the urge to throw himself bodily at his friend.

“Wait, you’re not sharing quarters?” Iolo pipes up. Everyone stops what they’re doing to stare at Finn and Poe. Even PEN-E twirls her head around to look at them.
“Um, we’re waiting?” Poe says uncertainly, looking strained around the eyes.

Iolo blinks. “You got married within a month of knowing each other but are waiting to share a room?”

Iolo’s eyes are oddly coloured, showing his Keshian heritage, and while Finn knows it just means he can see a broader visual spectrum he can’t help but feel that Iolo’s eyes are penetrating him somehow, reading all his secrets like they’re written down in a book and he’s leafing through the pages.

“Finn’s shy?” Poe offers and Finn glares at him. He is shy, and definitely inexperienced, but he doesn’t want everyone to know that. Poe catches his eye and shrugs helplessly, his brown eyes huge on his face. Finn couldn’t possibly stay mad at him.

“Well that’s something I didn’t need to know,” Jess states, pushing away from the table and picking up her tray. Snap follows her, winking at Finn as he goes.

“Go on,” Poe nudges him with his elbow, nodding to the tray still half full of food. Finn grabs a couple of things, some crinkly packets, a few fruits that look interesting, and a pot of the gloopy stuff Iolo had been eating out of curiosity, and stuffs them in his pockets, scooping up a beeping PEN-E and cradling her gently in his hands.

He gets up to leave but hesitates, realising that Karé and Iolo are still at the table and watching them with mild interest. His heart thumps, hard, but leans down and presses a fast kiss to Poe’s hair, inhaling his clean scent and straightening up as fast as possible.

“See you later,” he mumbles, and scarpers as quickly as he can.

“Boy, he really is shy,” he can hear Karé murmur behind him as he hurry out, his heart still thudding in his chest.

“I’m in serious trouble,” he groans and hits his head on the desk when he answers Rey’s vid call mere minutes later.

She looks alarmed. “It’s only been two days,” she says. “Finn, are you alright? Do I need to come over there? Because I will, just say the word and I’ll-”

“No, I’m just being dramatic,” he says quickly, and Rey’s shoulders visibly drop from where they were tensed up, practically by her ears.

“So what trouble are you in,” she asks, a furrow between her brow.

“I got married,” he whines.

“You got what?” she cries.

Finn unsticks his forehead from where it’s plastered to the desk once again.

“To who?”

“To Poe,” he whimpers.

“Back up, start from the beginning,” she commands, “Because I am totally and completely lost, and you don’t look any better, to be frank.”
So Finn starts from the beginning. He tells her about the shooting range with General Organa, volunteering to be a medic until there’s a mission where he can be a Pathfinder, signing up to be a real member of the Resistance and taking Poe’s name.

“And now because of that everyone thinks Poe and I got married and everyone’s so happy about it, it’s insane how many people have smiled at me in the corridors, and Poe says it’s been a morale boost so we just decided to go with it and now I’m fake married to Poe Dameron,” he sobs. 
“Rey, what am I supposed to do?”

Her eyes look wide and a bit scared. “Um, well, I don’t know really.”

“I don’t either,” he cries. “That’s the problem. I don’t know how to be in a relationship, and definitely not a relationship with the best pilot in the galaxy while all his closest friends and ninety percent of the entire Resistance base watch us.”

“Excuse me, I think I’d easily rival Dameron for best pilot in the galaxy status,” she interjects.

“That’s really not what I’m concerned about right now,” he says flatly.

“I really don’t know, Finn,” she says miserably. “I’ve not really had to think about this kind of thing before.”

“Neither have I.”

“There’s got to be data out there somewhere about this sort of… situation. Maybe do some research?” she suggests.

Finn looks at his datareader sitting innocently on the corner of his desk next to the pile of food he’d taken from the tray and PEN-E, whose nuzzling into the pink cushion next to her charging dock. That thing contains all sorts of information, so surely it can teach him something to make him feel less like he’s a fish floundering out of water.

“I’m sorry Finn, I have to go,” Rey’s voice calls him back to the present.

He sighs. “I miss you.”

“I miss you too,” she smiles beautifully, the dimple in her cheek showing. “I’ll try and check in with you more often, so you can tell me your woes as they occur.”

He moans again and thunks his head down on the desk. Her cheerful laughter tinkles over the speakers.

“May the force be with you, Finn,” she signs off, and he lifts his head up fast enough to see her wave goodbye.

Sighing, he pushes back from the desk and wanders over to pick up the datareader, pulling of his shirt as he goes and settling down on the bed. PEN-E beeps, and he looks fondly over at her.

“I think I can skip my binary exercises this once,” he says to her and she whirrs in response. “I’ve got slightly more pressing matters to attend to.”

He clicks on the datareader, pulls up the search programme, and types in: How to be a good husband.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

"Poe opens his arms and Finn steps into them for what he thinks is going to be a brief hug but what actually is long and warm, lingering almost. As Poe pulls back he brushes his lips along Finn's cheek, soft and light, and Finn suddenly feels like he's going to burst into flames. No one's ever touched their lips to his skin before. It was barely there, and hardly anything substantial, but he feels like his world has been rocked upside down. No one's ever kissed him before, in any capacity, and he's so incredibly glad that Poe was his first."

Chapter Notes

"Okay, Mr. Hoku, you can close your mouth now," and Mr. Hoku's lips smack together wetly as he has zero teeth and very little control over his muscles. Finn has no idea what a man so old is doing at a Resistance base but he doesn't bother to ask questions because Mr. Hoku is nice, and slowly dying, so he'd rather not waste the man's time.

"I'm going to refill your pill bottles, and it's two blue ones a day as always, and a red one before you go to sleep, okay?" he asks, and Mr. Hoku nods shakily.

Finn turns to the medical tray behind him to find that PEN-E has already pushed the right box of pills next to Mr. Hoku's empty refillable bottles and smiles. He pats the little droid on the head, murmuring a quiet good girl, and PEN-E beeps happily and flashes her torchlight on and off.

When he turns back around he sees that Mr. Hoku is rummaging slowly around in his giant fabric bag, making intelligible noises as he searches for something. Finn's gut sinks. Not another one.

"Mr. Hoku? Are you alright there?" he asks mostly to be polite because really he wants to run away and hide from this sweet old man and his giant bag full of force-knows-what. Honestly, why do old people always carry around massive bags with them? Surely it's a hindrance more than a help because Mr. Hoku's bag is about as big as he is and force knows that a strong wind could blow the man right over.

Mr. Hoku smacks his lips again and his shaking hands pull out what looks like a miniature forest. "Yes, yes," he mumbles, shoving the forest in Finn's direction.

He fumbles for it, trying not to drop the bottle of pills, and examines it carefully. It's a long and slim rectangular pot filled with rich soil, and little shoots of plants are inching their way upwards from their beds. They're weird green furry things with little branches that sway gently and tiny yellow dots cling to the very tip of the leaves. Honestly, what the fuck.

"This is very nice, Mr. Hoku, thank you," he attempts, smiling in what he hopes is a convincing
manner. Mr. Hoku flaps his hands around and mumbles something under his breath.

“What was that?”

“Many returns,” the old man repeats slightly louder than before and Finn nods. Okay then. It’s definitely another one of those.

“Here are your pills Mr. Hoku, don’t take them all at once,” he jokes, before realising he’s a medical personnel and probably shouldn’t joke about that sort of thing. “I mean,” he says quickly, “Don’t actually take them all at once, okay? And I’ll see you next week for your next checkup.”

Mr. Hoku nods in a distracted sort of way, taking the pill bottles Finn hands him and placing them into the depths of his giant bag, presumably never to be seen again. Finn wildly speculates on all the things that could be lurking down at the bottom of that bag, quickly shutting that train of thought down before it gets too scary.

Once Mr. Hoku’s shaky footsteps have vanished down the corridor, Finn’s shoulders slump and he turns to PEN-E in desperation.

“Another one,” he whispers fervently, placing the weird plant thing on the unused second shelf of the medical tray where it can sit next to the wide variety of other weird and unnecessary things he’s received from people throughout the day’s shift. “What am I supposed to do with all this stuff?”

PEN-E whirs lowly in what Finn guesses to be the droid equivalent of, don’t ask me. He sighs. It’s been just over twelve hours since he and Poe announced that they’re married and it seems like the entire base has taken it upon themselves to shower gifts onto Finn like he’ll know exactly what to do with them. He wonders briefly how Poe’s faring, but his friend is probably high in the sky right now and thus successfully avoiding awkwardly accepting a number of gifts that leave him frantically searching his mind as to what to do with them.

There’s a strangely shaped purple crystal that he’d received from his first patient, Cequmew, and wasn’t that name just a bitch to pronounce. He’d smiled bemusedly at her and she’d explained that it was for good luck and happy blessings for new couples, and he’d thought it was sweet and slipped it into his pocket to show Poe later. But after that came a velvet bag of buffed and shined bones from Diphda, a basket full of fluffy towels from the nursing team, and a datachip filled with songs “to get you in the mood” complete with a confusing wink from Leo Pruppa, one of the youngest members of the Resistance fleet and a constant pest to Finn because of his inclination to spray paint on the walls Finn so painstakingly cleans. Another patient, Shrimp, had given him a small collection of scuffed fighter and freighter models, sheepishly explaining that it was all he had to give, but he wished them the best. He’s also received strings of twinkly lights, a deck of cards featuring famous podracers, a holographic projector programmed to show the galaxy, and a beautiful wooden chair.

It’s all nice and lovely but what the fuck is he supposed to do with it all? Are people going to continue giving him gifts for what they believe is a real marriage when really it’s so fake it’s actually starting to eat at Finn’s insides, lying to everyone? He couldn’t even manage six hours as a Stormtrooper after he broke through his conditioning, how is he supposed to keep this up for force knows how long?

PEN-E beeps loudly, rotating her head so she can peer at the pot of strange plants. She’s managed to climb down onto the second shelf of the medical tray and Finn realises that he’s missed the show while he was spaced out, caught up in his own thoughts. It never fails to amuse him to watch PEN-E defy gravity and roll down and up walls, across ceilings and and surfaces she just shouldn’t be able to.
“I don’t know,” he sighs and PEN-E turns her head to peer up at him with her big lens. “How’s all this stuff even going to fit into my room?” he wonders absently.

Suddenly, he has the horrific vision of his room, looking like a bomb has hit it, filled to the brim with bits and pieces that have no business cluttering up his nice neat space. He thinks he’ll go insane if he can’t find some kind of storage boxes to put all this stuff in so he can just close the drawers and forget about it all so it won’t hurt his brain so much.

“Your next patient is here,” Ferran interrupts his thoughts and hands him a datareader with the patient’s information uploaded already. He’s been put on general checkup and refill duty and he thinks he’d be enjoying it more if he wasn’t dreading when a patient will pull something out of force knows where and say, “Oh and by the way, congratulations.”

It’s nice to chat to people though, and it’s simple enough conversation that it makes Finn feel far less scared about approaching folks in the future. As a Stormtrooper, Finn hardly talked to anyone outside of his own fight team, and even then, because of his status as someone outside of the group, it wasn’t anything substantial or solid. It’s been hard to push himself to communicate with more people than just Rey and Poe. He’s got PEN-E and BB-8, of course, but he still can’t understand most of what they say and they’re droids, so he doesn’t really think it counts. Having these small pockets of time in which he can practice interacting with actual people who haven’t been through near death experiences with him and just expect him to hand them their pills and maybe get embarrassed by a bit of teasing about Poe is doing wonders for the tightness he often feels in his chest when faced with social interaction.

After a few minutes of nonsensical chatter with Yoondoa, a beautiful lady with shiny dark skin and braids piled on her head who’s six months pregnant and is suffering from debilitating stomach cramps, he turns to hand her her prescription at the same as she produces an offering from behind her back and smiles sweetly up at him. He stares at her, then at whatever’s in her hand, and something inside him snaps and he finds himself making a loud strangled noise and storming out of the medbay.

He hurries back almost immediately though, because he’s not a complete heathen, and thanks Yoondoa for her gift while helping her off the bed, quickly scooping up PEN-E and slipping her into the pocket of his scrubs as well as the weird plant thing from Mr. Hoku, because he doesn’t know what it is and it’s starting to seriously stress him out.

“I’m taking my break!” he calls over his shoulder as he swiftly strides out of the medbay, not bothering to check if Ferran has heard him or not. The man will just have to deal with it.

He’s on a mission now and he has zero intention to be stopped. People call out to him in the corridors as he makes his way towards the fighter hanger but he doesn’t stop to say hello, keeping his eyes straight ahead and trying to concentrate on calming down the frantic beating of his heart.

He spots Poe’s iconic black X-Wing at the end of the hangar bay and Poe himself in his orange suit, his hands filthy with motor oil and BB-8 whizzing around his feet. He makes a beeline for his fake-husband, shushing PEN-E as she whirrs Poe’s name over and over in excitement.

“Finn!” Poe cries cheerfully, but his eyes quickly widen as he spots Finn hurtling towards him.

“What the hell is this,” Finn grits out and shoves the weird plant thing at Poe’s chest.

Bewildered, Poe’s hands come up to cradle it, leaving black smudges of oil on the pot. It should irk the part of Finn’s brain that’s obsessive about cleaning but it doesn’t because it’s Poe and when it comes to Poe his brain just turns into a big puddle of happiness and joy.
“Okay, first of all, hello,” Poe says, his warm eyes patient. He places the plant thing on the nearby stepladder up to the cockpit of his X-Wing and opens his arms wide, gesturing to Finn to come closer. Finn all but collapses into his embrace, feeling Poe’s arms come up from underneath to wrap securely around his waist as they always do and inhaling his friends scent where his nose is buried in Poe’s shoulder.

“Hi,” he mumbles into the fabric of Poe’s shirt. Poe hums and Finn can feel it vibrating between them. He buries his head even further into Poe’s shoulder, hunching over so Poe won’t have to go up onto his tiptoes to accommodate.

Poe starts to pull back and Finn’s reluctant to let go, more than content to just stay in the warm cradle of Poe’s embrace for the rest of his life, but he recognises that that urge is a bit weird and loosens his hold on his friend.


“You mean I can eat it?”

Poe huffs a laugh. “You can’t eat it, silly, the berries are poisonous.”

Finn blinks. Mr. Hoku has given him a poisonous plant? Does Mr. Hoku want to kill him? He’s only known the old man a day, what could he have possibly done to piss him off so much that he’d want to actually murder him?

Finn’s face must be doing something weird because Poe laughs again, soft and feathery, and reaches out to hold Finn’s hand, squeezing it gently.

“They’re not meant to be eaten, they’re meant to look pretty. It’s a housewarming gift.”

“A housewarming gift?” Finn repeats. “Who’s house is he warming?”

Poe lets go of his hand and awkwardly scrubs at the back of his neck, leaving a smear of black oil. “Uh, ours, I guess,” he mumbles.

“But we don’t live together.”

“Well, not for very much longer,” Poe states nonsensically. He turns around and brushes his fingers gently along the leaves of the plant. Finn can see the blur of oil on the back of Poe’s neck, almost blending in with the hair that curls gently there. He gets the feeling that Poe’s deliberately avoiding his gaze.

“What do you mean?” he says slowly, shifting on his feet and narrowing his eyes in Poe’s direction.

Poe’s shoulders hunch up and he puts his hands on his waist. Finn’s mind quickly informs him that Poe’s waist is tiny and that both of Finn’s hands could probably almost wrap around it fully. He often forgets how small his friend really is. Because Poe seems so much larger than life, it causes something sharp to stab at Finn’s chest when he thinks about how slight Poe is compared to him.

Poe sighs heavily, back still turned to him. “I mean that after my friends found out we’re not sharing quarters last night they all pitched in, hacked the personnel system, and changed our room assignment.” He spreads his hands and finally makes eye contact with Finn again. “We’re roomies now.”

“Please tell me that means the room is bigger,” Finn begs.
“Of course it is! I’m a Commander so my quarters are bigger anyway, and then there’s also the fact that we’re a couple now. Or,” he sucks in a quick breath, “A fake couple, actually.”

“Good, because I’ve been given a tonne of crap today, and now I have a place to put it all,” he smiles happily.

Poe nods seriously. “You want me to see if I can find some storage shelves somewhere? I know how you are about clutter.” Finn wants to hug him, tight. Poe knows him so well.

“And- hey wait, I haven't been given anything,” he pouts and Finn almost wants to laugh at the absurdity of it.

“Maybe that's because you've been up in the air all day.”

Poe shakes his head, his curls bouncing. “Nah, we’ve all been grounded. There's an electrical storm brewing so it's a no fly zone right now.”

“Hey,” he continues, his indignant reaction to his lack of gifts apparently forgotten. “They're turning all the power off but the emergency generators tonight because of the storm and me and the guys were gonna watch some old vids that BB-8 has stored to kill the time.” He taps BB-8 with his boot and Finn, actually, had forgotten that the droid was even there it's been so quiet. Come to think of it, so has PEN-E.

He crouches down to say hello to BB-8, slipping his hand into his pocket and drawing PEN-E carefully out. BB-8 rolls forwards eagerly, beeping a bunch of nonsense sounds, and PEN-E spins her head around and around, vibrating in Finn’s palm. He puts her down on the floor so the two can explore each other properly, straightening back up as he listens to them beep and whirr at each other. BB-8 is so much bigger than little PEN-E, and he worries for a second that Poe’s droid will accidentally run over and crush his little friend, before realising that's a really stupid thing to think.

Poe’s smiling fondly down at the droids, a silly smile on his face. Poe is known to be very good with droids, always so polite and affectionate, always crouching down to be on their level and listening to what they have to say. If Finn could understand binary he thinks all the droids on the base would babble endlessly about how great Poe is, how gentle and kind, funny and sweet. It's pretty much the same things that run through Finn’s mind on a daily basis, so at least he knows for sure that he and the droids have something in common, if not a shared language. Yet. Just give him time, he's learning.

He hears PEN-E beep the sound for Finn’s name, and then Poe’s, and drags his eyes away from his friend to see both of the little droids watching them, staring at them with their black lenses. It's almost comical how tiny PEN-E is compared to BB-8, and he worries for a second that Poe’s droid will accidentally run over and crush his little friend, before realising that's a really stupid thing to think.

BB-8 beeps something quizzical, aiming it at Poe, and Poe inexplicably blushes. Finn wishes fervently that he knew what the droid was saying.

“Shut up, buddy,” he mutters and PEN-E whines and twirls her way around Poe’s feet until he reaches down to pick her up.

“Here,” he says, stroking across PEN-E’s head and handing her back to Finn. “I knew they'd get along,” he blushes again, “Maybe a little too well, but.”

“I should get back,” Finn says a little awkwardly. “I kind of stormed out in a hurry.”

“Looked that way, yeah,” Poe laughs. He feels silly now that it's been explained to him, but at the
time he truly felt like his rope was fraying, in danger of snapping completely.

PEN-E beeps a string of sounds loudly as Finn goes to slide her into his pocket and flashes her torchlight on and off frantically. Finn frowns.

“She says she wants to stay here,” Poe translates and Finn can't help but feel a little sad about that. As if she's sensing it, PEN-E rolls across his palm and nudes his fingers like she's trying to reassure him.

Finn’s face must be showing his feelings because Poe quickly steps close and says, “We’re actually done here for the day, why don’t we come with you? I don't think Beebee-Ate and little Penny here want to be separated right now.”

Finn blinks at him. “In the medbay?”

“Yeah,” Poe grins and rubs his knuckles softly into Finn’s shoulder. “I wanna see you in action, hotshot.”

Finn’s not going to say no to spending more time with Poe, even if all he’s going to be doing is filling out prescriptions for his patients. Maybe they'll give their gifts to Poe instead of him and Finn will feel less stressed out by it all.

He smiles happily. “That’d be great!”

“Let me get showered and change out of these dirty clothes, and I’ll meet you there soon, okay?”

Finn nods quickly. He doesn't think Ferran will like it very much if Poe comes swanning in covered in oil and dirt, no matter how fond of him they are at the medbay or how charmingly he can smile.

Poe nudges BB-8 with his boot and the droid scoots over to Finn’s legs, peering up at his cupped hands where he's still holding PEN-E. He quickly places PEN-E on the ground and the two droids immediately go back to beeping at each other.

Poe opens his arms and Finn steps into them for what the thinks is going to be a brief hug but what actually is long and warm, lingering almost. As Poe pulls back he brushes his lips along Finn’s cheek, soft and light, and Finn suddenly feels like he's going to burst into flames. No one's ever touched their lips to his skin before. It was barely there, and hardly anything substantial, but he feels like his world has been rocked upside down. No one's ever kissed him before, in any capacity, and he's so incredibly glad that Poe was his first.

Poe’s got his hands on Finn’s shoulders and is mumbling something about heading off now, but all Finn can hear is the static in his brain. Poe squeezes his shoulders and then leaves and Finn watches him go, still stunned. He realises belatedly that half the people in the hangar are looking in the direction, and probably have been for the entirety of their exchange. They've all just seen Finn receive his first kiss.

Not that they know that, of course. They probably think that he and Poe have done all manner of things, and his mind turns to the datareader last night and everything it said about romance and intimacy and how he'd suddenly felt hot under the collar of Poe’s borrowed shirt.

He clears his throat and picks up the plant thing, which he'd almost entirely forgotten about. BB-8 and PEN-E follow him as he walks slowly out of the hangar bay, lost in the strange haze that's settled over him. He manages to shake himself out of it by the time he returns to the medbay, BB-8 and PEN-E trailing behind him loyal.
Ferran humphs when he sees him come through the doors. “If you're going to sneak out to fool around you could at least be more subtle about it,” he mutters, crossing his arms across his chest.

“What do you mean?” Finn asks, confused.

Ferran raises his thick eyebrows and points to Finn’s scrubs. Finn looks down and- oh. Those are Poe's handprints all over his shirt. The oil on his hands have left big black prints all over his shoulders. There's one on his waist and Finn doesn't even remember Poe’s hands being there, but it must have been from when they'd hugged so tight the first time. He scrambles to tug the scrubs over his head and, yep, there's handprints all over his back too.

A medibot wheels up and offers him another pair of scrubs and Finn takes them quickly, tugging the shirt over his head and hoping no one's noticed how flustered he feels. It's useless, because all his fumbling has caught the attention of the other nurses, who are whistling in his direction now, laughing. Even Dr. Kalonia winks at him.

Burning, he scurries into the curtained off patient's room and buries himself in his datareader until a either a patient or Poe comes to put him out of his misery. BB-8 and PEN-E follow at his feet like ducklings, and he picks PEN-E up and places her on the second shelf of the medical tray so that she's of a height with BB-8 and can show them all the weird stuff they've been given today.

Poe joins him some ten minutes later, hair wet and curling across his forehead in ringlets, wearing a white shirt that's going see through from his damp skin and a pair of shorts. Finn's never seen him in a pair of shorts before, and is stuck momentarily on how Poe's legs look, brown and hairy with strong thighs and wiry calves. He's not wearing any socks with his shoes either and Finn can see the delicate bones of his ankles.

Poe immediately sequesters himself on a chair in the patient’s room and starts to dig into the contents of the medical tray, methodically rummaging through all the gifts Finn’s been given over the course of the day. They pass the afternoon that way, Finn administering prescriptions to patients and listening to them chatter pleasantly with Poe, letting his friend take the gifts they offer and hearing him ooh and ahh over them. He coos happily at the purple crystal from Cequmew and mentions that it’ll make a nice addition to his collection.

“Your collection?” Finn asks, unable to stop himself.

Poe puffs out his chest proudly. “I've been doing it since I was a kid,” he explains. “I'd find the shiniest and smoothest rocks in the garden and keep them in my pocket. I’d touch them during the day, just to feel how smooth they were.” He rubs his thumb over the smooth side of the crystal, and then hands it to Finn.

Finn strokes his thumb across the crystal in the same way as Poe had. It's smooth and cold on his skin, and there's something satisfying in how hard and soft it feels at the same time. He hands it back to Poe, whose looking at him with his warm brown eyes, and smiles softly. He doesn't quite get it, but he'd be happy to sit there and let Poe show him all the rocks in his collection as if it were the most interesting thing in the world.

By the end of his shift the pile of gifts has grown exponentially and they have to borrow a bag from one of the nurses in order to cart it all out. PEN-E seems tired so Poe scoops her up and holds her all the way back to Finn’s room, murmuring nonsense down at her as she vibrates in her hand. BB-8 stays close, looking between her owner and Finn’s little droid curiously.

“I figured we could grab your stuff from your room and check out the new room they've given us,” he says, keeping his eyes on PEN-E.
“That won't take long,” Finn admits. He still doesn't have much stuff outside of the things that Poe has given him. The only thing that's really his is PEN-E.

Poe grins. “Then you can help me haul all my stuff out of my room.”

Finn groans. Poe’s room is a mess. He's been in the Resistance a long time and is quite a sentimental person to boot so he's managed to amass a huge amount of stuff. He has piles of shirts that don't fit on the single rail he's been given for his clothes, has multiple pairs of boots, and stacks and stacks of books. He, apparently, has a rock collection, and Finn knows he has model fighters and freighters, a toolkit full of nuts and bolts, a small collection of nice smelling candles, and at least a dozen boxes of unidentified junk.

“I can't,” he gasps. “My back can't take it.”

Poe snorts. “That is such a lie, your back hasn't hurt in days.” He grins cheekily. “Besides, you're my husband now, which means you're obligated to help me with things like this.”

Finn whimpers. “I take it back, I want a divorce.”

Poe just laughs brightly as PEN-E beeps and he goes back to cooing at her. Finn rolls his eyes. It seems that PEN-E has a new favourite.

Poe skips off to find a few boxes to pack their stuff into, but he needn’t worry because literally all Finn’s got are the clothes that Poe gave him, PEN-E’s pink cushion, and his datareader. He doesn’t need to figure out a new way to receive Rey’s vid calls because every room has a vidscreen automatically built in.

“Oh,” Poe says a little bleakly when he sees that all of Finn’s belongings can fit in two hands. “I can’t believe you’re still wearing my clothes, buddy. We’ll have to get you some of your own, come on.”

Poe drags him halfway across the base in order to badger personnel services into doling out some clothes for Finn. He gets some brown cargo pants of his own and a pair of trousers with stripes down the side made out of a fabric he’s never felt before, a dozen black shirts and a dozen white shirts, and two thick sweaters, along with an assortment of mismatched boxer shorts and socks. Most importantly, they issue him a new pair of boots, and he eagerly strips off Poe’s borrowed ones and jams his feet into the new ones in relief.

“Alright, we get it, you like your new boots,” Poe mutters as Finn groans his happiness out, massaging the supple leather of the boots. They’re the same sandy brown as Poe’s jacket and are worn in already, like they belonged to someone else before him, but Finn doesn’t care so long as his feet don’t grow anymore giant blisters.

They carry Finn’s belongings and the bag of gifts to Poe’s room and set out methodically sorting through Poe’s things and placing them into the spare boxes. It’s not as bad as Finn thought it would be, mostly because Poe lets him take charge and organise things, fetching items and placing them into the right boxes when he’s asked. They end up throwing out a lot of junk, useless bits of scrap metal and pieces of paper, a bunch of stylus’ that no longer work, a few posters of pilots that Poe blushingly tears off the walls and shoves into the rubbish pile.

Finn makes sure to carefully wrap the photo frames that Poe owns in the fabric of his many t-shirts so they won’t break. He sits and traces his fingers across the faces of people he doesn’t know and Poe softly tells him that that’s his mum, his dad, his grandparents. There’s one of Poe, Karé, Iolo, and a man Finn’s never seen before. Muran, Poe murmurs, and tells him about how he’d died just before
they’d all joined the Resistance. It reminds Finn again of his desire for a camera to capture his friends’ faces himself. He’d never forgive himself if Poe went up in the air and never came back and Finn didn’t even have a picture to remember him by. The same goes for Rey, too. They live dangerous lives, all of them, even though it feels safe right now, holed up in Poe’s room with PEN-E and BB-8 burbling nonsense chatter in the background.

The moment breaks, though, as Finn sorts through Poe’s collection of miscellaneous t-shirts, all with weird slogans written on the front. There’s a bunch in languages he doesn’t understand, but there’s also plenty in standard that he doesn’t understand either. He holds up a red t-shirt that says *Save an X-Wing, Ride a Pilot!* on the front and shows it to Poe.

“Do you want this?” he asks, and Poe laughs so hard that Finn actually has to whack him on the back to get him to breathe.

Eventually they lug all of Poe’s stuff down a few sets of corridors until they reach what Poe tells him is their new room, typing in the passcode to the door. Finn’s slightly more concerned about finally getting to put down the box of books he’s carrying. He’s reminded of when he tried to lift BB-8 and is suddenly extremely glad that PEN-E doesn’t weigh nearly as much.

He hefts the books up into his arms, adjusting their weight as he hears the door slide open, and walks forward straight into Poe’s back. He’s stopped, stood still in the doorway, and is staring at something in the room. Finn pokes his head around the box and Poe’s shoulder and- ah. It’s a bed.

In the middle of the room sits the biggest and most ornate bed Finn has ever seen. Its metal frame has been twisted into beautiful shapes and curls and the mattress looks thick and soft, like if Finn lied down on it right now he’d never want to get back up. It’s so big that for a second he thinks that if he and Poe stretched their bodies all the way out across it they wouldn’t even meet in the middle.

“So which side do you want?” Poe asks, eyes a little wide and frantic.

The question pulls Finn up short for a minute. Does he have a preferred side of the bed? He’s never shared a bed with anyone before. Luckily, Poe answers his dilemma for him.

“I like the to be on the right,” he says, nodding to the side he wants. “Or, I guess, the left, depending on where you’re standing.”

Finn just shrugs and puts the box of books down, heading over to what’s going to be his side of the bed. The whole thing is pushed against the wall directly opposite to the door so it’s the first thing you see when you enter, with plenty of space either side so they won’t have to clamber over each other to get up in the mornings. There’s a desk next to Finn’s side with a giant vidscreen above it, and on the opposite wall there’s an actual wardrobe and chest of drawers. At the foot of the bed there’s another chest, one where you have to lift up the whole lid to see what’s inside. On the left there’s a door that leads to a small bathroom, toilet, sink, and shower, and Finn sighs in relief. No more communal showers.

He looks down at the bed and spreads a hand on the mattress. This is where he’s going to sleep for the next few weeks, at least, if not months. Next to Poe.

He takes PEN-E out of his jacket pocket and puts her on the floor so she can explore the new space and she whizzes around happily, beeping every now and then. BB-8 helps push in a few of the boxes, but gets distracted by PEN-E as she climbs up the walls and halfway across the ceiling. He and Poe start to hang up their clothes, quickly filling up the wardrobe and assigning themselves drawers for their belongings. Poe gets an entire drawer for his collection of weird t-shirts, and Finn neatly folds and arranges them so they all fit in while Poe places his photo frames and the miniature...
model fighters and freighters on the top of the chest. Inside the chest at the foot of the bed they put some blankets of Poe’s, his toolkit and rock collection, and a bunch of the little gifts people have given them today that are too weird to display. The little plant thing goes on the desk, along with the holoprojector of the galaxy and Poe’s sweet scented candles.

When all’s said and done the place looks pretty neat. It’s not stark and bare like Finn’s room had been, rather it seems warm and cosy, like it’s been lived in and loved in. Poe’s books are still in boxes because there’s no bookshelves and Finn can’t quite bring himself to let them be scattered about the room like Poe used to do, but he gets the feeling that the more he lives in this place then the more he’ll be able to loosen his tight grip on his compulsion to tidy.

Poe says that they’re going to skip dinner and secure the room with the squishy chairs early so they can eat junk food with their friends and watch movies while the power’s down, so Finn kills some time by practicing his binary with PEN-E. Together they’ve worked through about half of the exercises that the General has sent him and so he sits at the desk with PEN-E on her little cushion next to him, heads bent over the datareader as he prints out ones and zeroes. Eventually she starts to sound out the letters for him, and he learns what the alphabet sounds like and repeats it over and over until he’s got it down. He thinks for a second that he might be annoying Poe with the racket he’s making, but his friend is sitting on the bed with a blanket around his shoulders, completely absorbed in his book.

He moves on to verbs and simple nouns, points at objects and gets PEN-E to name them until he has a handful of knowledge to memorise. BB-8 rolls over and joins in, beeping helpfully along with PEN-E until they seem to get into a little spat, loudly whirring over one another. Finn looks helplessly at Poe, making a sound of distress, and Poe’s brow furrows as he watches the droids and then smooths out again as he smiles.

“They’re arguing about grammar,” he winks at Finn and goes back to his book.

Finn learns that when PEN-E says his name, she’s not just saying Finn. [Friend-Finn] she beeps, then [Friend-Poe], and then what he recognises as Rey’s name but it’s not quite the same.

“Can you repeat that?” he asks, and PEN-E happily whirrs Rey’s name, but still it’s different.

“Spell it out for me, buddy,” and PEN-E dutifully beeps [H - E - R - O - R - E - Y] and Finn blinks.

“Hero? You call Rey your hero?”

PEN-E spins her little head around and flashes her torch on and off. [Hero-Rey] she says, then [Hero-Leia] and [Hero-Jess] and [Hero-Karé].

“Boy, when you meet Rey for real I’m gonna lose you for good, aren’t I?” Finn mutters and PEN-E rolls forward and gently nudges his fingers. He smiles fondly. Rey is his hero too, so it’s not like he can argue.

When both their stomachs are grumbling too loud to be ignored any longer, Poe picks up PEN-E and leads them all into the kitchens through the back way. He rummages around the stock room for a bit a reemerges with an armful of shiny crisp packets and an assortment of other food. He leaves a credit chip on the counter programmed to contain the right amount and records a little message to say thank you that will play the next time someone touches it. He signs it off with, “From Finn and Poe,” and it makes Finn smile so hard his cheeks hurt.

They collapse on the purple sofa, Poe lying down flat on his back and draping his legs over Finn’s lap. He’s still wearing his shorts so his legs are bare, and Finn very carefully lets his fingers rest on
Poe’s bony ankles. PEN-E rolls herself onto Poe’s chest and sits there, being lifted up and down with the motions of Poe’s breathing.

Poe shoots off a message to his friends and while they wait they flick through some of the movies BB-8 has stored on its hard drive, the droid projecting them in front of the sofa so they can see. The power goes down at about seven, and he and Poe sit comfortably in the dark until their friends spill through the door at about seven fifteen.

“I brought alcohol,” Snap announces, wiggling a bottle of clear liquid in their direction.

Jess and Karé drag over chairs and Iolo plops himself down on the floor, nabbing some crisp packets as he goes.

“Shots, shots, shots,” Jess chants and makes grabby hands at the bottle. Snap passes around tiny cups, winking at Finn as he goes, and oh, Finn has a bad feeling about this.

The liquid that Snap sloppily pours into his tiny cup smells… interesting. “To the happy couple!” Jess crows at the same time as Poe says, “Down the hatch,” before tipping his head back and swallowing the liquid in one go. All the others follow, and Finn hastens to join in, immediately gagging on the strong bitter taste.

“Oh, that is so gross,” he gasps, sticking his tongue out like that means he won’t be able to taste it anymore.

Karé laughs, twinkly and light. “It gets easier the more you have,” she states, and that’s how Finn ends up completely plastered at barely eight in the evening.

Poe wants to watch some soft romantic film but both Finn and Jess lobby hard for the tacky horror flick about shapeshifting aliens. He spends two hours laughing so hard he cries, a bubbly feeling in his chest that can’t be contained. Poe gently takes the tiny cup out of his hands after his fifth drink and passes him a biscuit instead and Finn makes a mess of crumbs trying to eat it through his laughter. They watch a dramatic spy film and eventually give into Poe’s wide-eyed pleading for the romantic film, which turns out to be about ghosts.

In the dark, Finn somehow ends up slumped next to Poe on the squishy purple sofa, his face resting on Poe’s belly and his fingers curled up in the soft end of Poe’s shirt. Poe starts to stroke the back of his neck about halfway through the ghost film and Finn has to stop himself from humming happily. PEN-E, however, has no such qualms and chirps her way through all the films, endearing herself to all of their friends. She ends up nestled in Iolo’s lap while he whispers to her, stroking her head slowly as the characters on screen fall in love.

“I think we can call that a success,” Snap announces once the credits start rolling at the end of the film.

“Hear, hear,” Jess cheers. “Who’s up for movie night every Taungsday?” and they all make noises of the affirmative nature.

All of their friends file out eventually, leaving Poe rubbing at Finn’s back in an attempt to get him up and moving, when really all it’s doing is making him feel even sleepier.

“Come on buddy, up and at ’em, we can’t sleep here.”

Finn groans into Poe’s belly, and when Poe laughs he can feel it vibrate against his face. “Don’t wanna,” he whines.
“Look, even Penny’s all ready to go, we gotta put these droids to bed before they collapse.”

Finn dutifully peels his face away from Poe’s stomach to look at PEN-E whose got her little torchlight on and is waiting at the door.

“For Penny,” mumbles Finn and pulls himself off the sofa. Suddenly, gravity seems very heavy and it takes all of his concentration and Poe’s arm around his waist to stop himself from falling face first into the floor. He almost trips over BB-8 and the droid beeps indignantly, and all Finn can make out is an angry sounding [Watch it!].

They walk through the dark corridors slowly, Finn stumbling over his own feet and occasionally BB-8 when the droid doesn’t move fast enough. BB-8 eventually whistles something loud enough to make Finn’s ears hurt and rolls off to join PEN-E, whose lighting up their path with her little torch.

“Who put a bee in their bonnet,” Finn grumbles, then almost trips over his own feet as he laughs.

“A bee,” he gasps, “Oh my- Poe, a bee in Beebee-Ate.” He tugs on Poe’s shoulder so he can see the smile pulling at the corners of his friends mouth. “Beebee-Ate ate a bee,” he wheezes, laughing so hard that he can’t quite pull in air.

He’s still giggling when they stumble up to the door, Poe propping him up against the wall so he can type in their door code. They fall through the doorway and Finn plonks himself on the big soft bed, toeing off his boots and starfishing across the mattress. Poe dumps a bunch of blankets on him and heads off to the bathroom, mumbling something about brushing his teeth.

Finn stares at the ceiling for a second before tugging off his clothes and pulling on a pair of pyjama pants from Poe and another one of his soft t-shirts, a slogan in Phindian across the front that Poe refused to translate.

BB-8 has rolled itself into the corner and is powered down for the night, but PEN-E is sat on her little pillow with her torchlight still on so they can see in the dark of the room. Finn gets up and clicks on the holoprojector of the galaxy and it blinks into life, casting dark blue and purple illuminations across the room and swirly white dots with labels on them describing the major star systems. He hums happily and wiggles into bed, pulling the blankets up to his chin and watching the galaxy slowly rotate around him. Poe comes out of the bathroom in his own pyjamas and walks straight into the Elrood Sector of the Outer Rim. Blinking, he takes in the flickering lights and Finn stretched out on the bed and smiles fondly.

“I bet you know most of these places,” Finn whispers into the dark. “Bet these places know you, too.”

Poe hums as he climbs into bed and curls up next to Finn. “Most of ‘em, yeah,” he replies quietly.

“I’ve never slept next to anyone before,” Finn says, hushed.

“Never?”

“Never,” he confirms. “Never hugged anyone before you. Never kissed anyone before you.”

Poe’s incredibly quiet next to him, silent and still. Finn can hear him breathing but that’s about it. He keeps his eyes on the stars.

“I’m glad it was you,” he sighs finally.

“Me too,” Poe says in a low voice, close and intimate.
Finn’s eyes are getting heavier, and when he looks across the pillow to Poe he can see his friends eyes are closed, his eyelashes brushing the tops of his cheeks. The galaxy lights up his skin as it spins slowly around and Finn is struck dumb by the image.

Against his will, his eyes slip closed, and he falls into a dreamless sleep.

He wakes up some time later, when it’s still dark and the galaxy is still turning, and Poe is stretched out on his stomach with his arms flung to the side, head turned in Finn’s direction, beside him. Finn thinks absurdly for a second that if he climbed on top of his friend and spread out his arms too they’d look like an X-Wing. He giggles softly, not wanting to disturb Poe, and the bubbly feeling in his chest still lingers from all the tiny drinks he had, so he knows he’s just being silly.

Still, he reaches a hand across the mattress and grips Poe’s fingers, tangling them together and closing his eyes again. Holding hands isn’t silly, especially not with Poe. The stars glide across both of their skins and Finn watches how Poe twitches and mumbles in his sleep, his eyes running fast behind their lids. His skin is sleep-warm next to Finn’s and his hair is a soft mess of curls across his forehead and around his ears. Finn has the sudden urge to reach out and stroke it. He tightens his grip on Poe’s hand, shifting closer, to stop himself.

Sleep is pulling at him again and he’s slightly more resistant this time, his head feeling just a little bit clearer. He knows he wants to look at Poe some more while he can, but his eyelids keep falling closed for longer and longer spans of time and eventually he gives in.

Finn wakes up first in the morning, bleary eyed and groggy, trying to keep his groans to a minimum. Poe is still fast asleep next to him on his stomach and they’ve managed to move into the centre of the bed, curled up together with their calves tangled. Poe’s still holding his hand but in the night he’s brought it up to his chin and Finn can feel the puffs of his slow breaths across his knuckles.

He gently disentangles himself from his friend and slowly goes through his morning routine. The little plant on the desk sways cheerily and Finn feels a bit sick watching it, so he presses the button to turn the holoprojector off and quickly averts his eyes, stumbling into the bathroom. The lights have come on again and are way too bright. They hurt Finn’s eyes as he brushes his teeth and winces at his reflection in the mirror. He’s tempted to have a shower so he will look less like he’s on death’s door but Poe’s clock on the desk had told him he didn’t have a lot of time until his shift at medbay.

He pulls on some clothes, his own clothes rather than Poe’s borrowed ones, and his new boots, taking the time to wiggle his toes and revel at how they don’t pinch at all. He knocks on PEN-E’s head to wake her up, shushes her when she beeps [Good morning, Friend-Finn], pointing at BB-8 and Poe still asleep.

He closes the door softly behind him when he goes, leaving Poe sleep-soft and warm in the middle of their bed.

Dr. Kalonia hands him a water bottle when she seems him enter the medbay and he nods his grateful thanks and downs the whole thing. He keeps on drinking water throughout the morning shift, wincing less and less as midday approaches, and amicably accepts even more gifts off his patients. He gets given a leather wrist watch from a gentle Caamasi named Beenj’Es and he hurries to strap it to his wrist, beaming.

Poe drops in at lunch, telling him he’s here to inspect the morning’s haul, and he silently hands Finn a sandwich and some fruit, and Finn happily digs in, the food appeasing his growling stomach.
Poe ooh’s and ahh’s over Finn’s new wrist watch and the assortment of other gifts he’s received, including another plant and a few candles that Poe gets excited about, shoving them under his nose and smelling each one. He pats PEN-E on the head as he gets up to leave and brushes another kiss against Finn’s cheek, whistling as he walks out of the doors.

Two weeks pass in much the same fashion, Finn attending more lessons with General Organa where he gets to show off his improving abilities. Whenever she praises him something in his chest glows happily for the rest of the night. She tells him that he no longer needs to mop the floors, that they’ve got actual employees who are paid to do that, and so Finn spends some extra time practicing binary until he can mostly hold a conversation without having to think about it too much.

Poe cycles through his seemingly endless collection of weird graphic t-shirts and Finn gets used to sleeping next to him at night, waking up most mornings curled up in the centre of the bed with him, their knees knocking. Once or twice he wakes up with Poe’s back plastered against his front, feeling his ribs expand in and out in time with his soft breathing. Those times he lets himself stay in the moment a little longer, breathing in the scent of Poe’s hair. Poe always grumbles when he moves away, and Finn is loathe to leave, but he almost always has to be up earlier than his friend, and only once or twice gets to watch a sleepy Poe stumble around the room and rub at his eyes, his stubble dark against his cheeks and throat.

Sleeping next to Poe has calmed his dreams about Ren and his lightsaber somewhat, but sometimes he wakes up and hears Poe whimpering softly, his forehead creased like he’s in pain, and there’s nothing he can really do to soothe Poe’s bad dreams. He rubs his palms against Poe’s back helplessly, feeling his muscles twitch and spasm, and whispers nonsense about how he’s safe, about how Finn’s here. He has no idea if it helps or not, and the minutes seem to drag endlessly on. He has trouble getting back to sleep after, even though Poe softens out and dreams pleasantly for the rest of the night.

Poe keeps touching him gently, holding his hand and hugging him like always, but also pressing kisses to his cheeks and forehead, his hands firm on Finn’s waist. People always coo when they seem them together, telling them how cute and sweet they are, sighing happily. Poe was right when he said them being married, or pretending to be anyway, is a boost for morale. It’s like people just can’t help themselves when they see Finn and Poe coming down the hallway, hand in hand.

It makes his stomach churn, to know that he’s lying to everyone. Every touch, every kiss, is a lie. He’s still happy, of course, to be around Poe and to reach out and touch him whenever he wants, at least that part of their friendship hasn’t changed. But when they’re in public Finn is just slightly more stiff and uncomfortable, and he feels like he’s rattling out of place unless Poe discreetly squeezes his hand, letting him know that he’s there.

He puts in a lot of time at the shooting range and gets to know some of the more frequent visitors there. Some of them are Pathfinders for the Resistance and Finn pumps them for information in anticipation of his new job when the time comes. He gets on well with a happy young man named Howard Dayjump, who’s been a Pathfinder for the Resistance for about a year and is more than willing to chat to Finn about everything it involves. A great big woman with short blonde hair who introduces herself as March sometimes pitches in, and a small waify brunette girl, Enif Plio, whose aim with a rifle is unrivalled, quietly leads Finn to the hand-to-hand practice area where he ends up killing more than a few hours locked in combat with her.

Rey still vids him about every other day and PEN-E squeals and spins around in tight circles throughout their conversations, making Rey giggle and the dimple pop in her cheek. She gushes about the Force, and all the things she can do with it, including levitating rocks. Finn stares really hard at Poe’s rock collection after their chats, willing one of them to move with his mind, but nothing...
ever happens. He makes PEN-E promise not to ever tell anyone that he even attempted. Best to leave that stuff to Rey, probably.

He feels restless under his skin even though he's got plenty going on to keep him busy. On top of his binary lessons with the General, his shifts at the medbay, and hanging out with Poe and his friends, he's taken to wandering down to engineering with PEN-E cupped in his palm. To begin with it was so that she could see her old friends in the section, her fellow PEN-designated droids and the people who used to look after her, but as she whizzed about the place beeping at droids and folks alike, Finn had wandered and found himself at the scrap station, pawing through the material there and assembling something roughly in his mind. As a Stormtrooper, Finn had plenty of experience putting together bits of nothing to create something, usually a weapon or communication device. It was a useful lesson they'd taught him, but not necessarily one that could help him build a camera, of all things.

He’d taken to letting PEN-E wheel off and burying himself in the scrap pile for an hour or so, gathering bits and pieces that may or may not work when put together. The folks in engineering left him mostly alone, unless PEN-E had managed to accidentally knock someone over or set something on fire. Which only happened once, but still. He’d chase up PEN-E and haul the bits and pieces that might be useful back to his and Poe’s room and spread them out on the floor, and then dig around Poe’s toolbox so he could fiddle with fitting the pieces together. Poe would often drop in to change clothes and find Finn sprawled out on his stomach and swearing as he tried to assemble the damn thing properly. Poe had just raised his eyebrows, disappeared, and come back later holding a miniature holoscreen that he thrust into Finn’s face.

“Talk to Rey,” he’d said, then wandered off again.

Blinking, Finn had sat there and listened to Rey ramble about every dumb thing he’d done whilst assembling the camera and the obediently picked it apart and put it back together again following her instructions.

“I didn't know you talked to Rey,” he’d said to Poe once Rey had cheerily signed off and Poe had changed into his pyjamas, eating some crunchy fruit and reading a book.

“We have common interests,” he'd said vaguely and winked at Finn.

Despite the progress with the camera and the full heart he now carries just thinking about Rey and Poe, he still feels unsettled. Unstable, really, like he's going to tip over at any moment. Like when he had drank too much that first movie night and couldn’t control his body against the magnetic pull of gravity. Just where he’s falling, he doesn’t know.

He’s looking through the scrap pile, trying to find the right motherboard, PEN-E beeping something to the little gang of tiny droids that follow her around whenever she comes down here, when a small lady with green olive coloured skin and red painted nails drops something down in front of him.

“I made these, for you,” she gestures to what she just dropped on the desk. Finn blinks. They’re rings.

“They’re made from an alloy with a type of material that naturally adjusts itself, it’s pretty amazing, I won’t go into it because you’ll get bored, but,” she continues, “They should fit both yours and Poe’s fingers just fine.”

Finn blinks at her again. The gifts people were getting them had trickled down to only one or two a day in the past week, and really only small things. These are- they’re rings. His mind seems stuck on that, like it can’t quite let it go. Rings. Matching rings.
“You like them, yes?” she says nervously, and Finn realises he’s not said anything.

“Yes! Oh- yes, of course, they’re lovely, thank you so much. We hadn’t-” he stutters. “We hadn’t gotten around to this yet, so. Thank you, thank you so much.”

“You’re most welcome,” she grins. “Many happy returns.”

Finn murmurs his thanks again and watches her go, then drags his eyes down to the rings sitting innocently on the desk. They’re plain and gold, quite wide and thin, and they look so delicate that Finn almost doesn’t want to touch them. He musters up the courage to stroke his finger along the rim of one of them, feeling the cool metal on his skin. He doesn’t dare slip one on, not without talking to Poe first.

He and Poe haven’t discussed at any length how far they’re going to go with this charade. Poe seems happy to continue holding his hand and giving him fleeting kisses, anywhere but the lips, possibly indefinitely. There’s something in Finn, though, that’s literally going to explode unless they talk about it and plan something out. The tactical strategist that was drummed inside of him in his time as a Stormtrooper rears its ugly head and tells him that he can’t keep going without knowing what the end game is. But the fragile flutters of his heart want desperately for him not to upset the status quo, to not break something that’s making him so happy.

He watches the gold glint in the light and then quickly scoops them up, abandoning his search for a motherboard and whistling for PEN-E. She rolls over and asks what’s so important but Finn can only mutely shake his head at her, his voice unable to form the words. She stares up at him for a moment and then gently spins over to his foot and nudges it softly. With that wordless invitation he picks her up and holds her in his hands as he walks slowly out of the engineering station and back to his quarters. She vibrates in his palm, buzzing steadily, and he grounds himself with her, wiling the afternoon away practicing binary verbs and laughing at PEN-E when she lights up her torch in her enthusiasm.

By the time that dinner rolls around he feels slightly more stable. He hasn’t looked at the rings again but he can feel them in his pocket, heavy and light all at once. PEN-E beeps that she wants to find BB-8, and Finn, pulling on his jacket, watches her whiz down the corridor like a worried parent letting their child out into the big wide world. No matter how much he knows it’s silly, he still can’t help but feel like someone’s going to step on her whenever she wanders around the base alone. She’s just so small, and he’s reminded of how when he first met her he thought she looked like a baby bird, perched there in the General’s palm.

He trails his fingers down the walls of the corridor as he walks slowly to the mess hall. He finds himself reluctant to see Poe after the gift he’d received earlier. He doesn’t want to face what Poe’s reaction will be, positive or negative.

He abstently notes that the walls could do with another good scrubbing, some of their shine getting lost in all the dirt that the countless bodies in the base track in. What with him living with Poe, actual human hurricane, and his interest in the bits and bobs he finds in engineering and brings back to their room, Finn’s obsessive compulsion to keep things neat and clean has become lax somewhat. They still haven’t found storage for all of Poe’s books, so they sit scattered around their room as their owner reads and discards them in turn, and Finn can’t find it in himself to care very much. He himself sometimes steps on stray pieces of copper wire and even once the sharp end of a screwdriver that he’d accidentally left on the floor before going to bed. It’s nice, he thinks, to have bits and pieces of themselves strewn about the place, mingling together. Domestic, almost.

When he gets to the mess hall there’s only Iolo sitting at their usual table, so Finn grabs himself a tray and fills it up with whatever it is they’re serving today, swipes a pot of the gloopy stuff that he knows
Iolo likes, and makes his way over. Iolo smiles brightly when Finn nudges the pot over to him and digs in enthusiastically. Finn doesn’t get it. It’d been cold and slippery on his tongue in an unpleasant way when he’d tasted it but Iolo is always eating the stuff, so Finn makes sure to nab his friend some whenever he can.

They chatter pleasantly about Finn’s progress with the camera and Iolo mentions that he and Snap have some data sticks that Finn can use to store the photos on if he wants. Finn mentally rearranges his plans for the camera to include a port for the sticks, and makes a note to ask Rey about whether the holoprojector for the galaxy can be programmed to hold new memory, so that he can project the photos whenever he wants.

They’re interrupted by Jess clattering her tray on the table, ruffling Finn’s hair as she goes. “What’s up, nerds?” she says nonsensically and immediately starts shovelling food into her mouth.

“Hi, Finn,” he hears Poe’s amused voice and then feels lips against his cheek, high up on the cheekbone, and then Poe’s sliding into place next to him on the table and slinging his arm around Finn’s shoulders, squeezing affectionately. Finn grasps the hand on his shoulder with his own, and they both start to eat their dinner one handed, unwilling to let go of each other.

“Where’ve you been?” he asks around a mouthful of weird green stuff.

“Briefing with the General,” Poe explains. “Karé and Snap are still over there charting the flight paths for when we go lightspeed.”

“A proper mission, then?”

“Finally.” Poe grins. “We’ve been detecting some First Order activity along the Corellian Trade Spine, big shipments of things going ‘missing’ and the like, so we’re gonna do some runs and see if we can pick up some information.”

Finn shakes his head. For every Senator who donates and supports the Resistance there’s another who deals with the First Order.

“We’re going to follow the path between Javin and Yag’Dhul,” Poe continues, and Finn hums. There’s two systems between Javin and Yag’Dhul, he knows from his absent studying of the galaxy holoprojector. It’ll be a long run, even if they don’t find anything.

“Doesn’t that intersect with the Rimma Trade Route?”

Poe nods quickly. “That’s where we think they’re grabbing the cargo. Two big trade runs like that crossing over is the perfect place to hide some shady business. There’s also no space over that way owned by anyone, it’s not like the Parlemian Trade Route where you have to answer to the Cronese Mandate, the Allied Tion Sector, and the Tion Hegemony.”

Finn squeezes his hand. “You be careful, okay?”

Poe grins rakishly, his eyes sparkling. “I’m the best there is,” he says cheerfully. “If I can’t do it then no one can.”

“Hey,” Jess glares at him from across the table. “Both Iolo and I are here, you know? Not to interrupt you two loving it up over the geography of the galaxy but we’re pretty damn great pilots ourselves, and I’ll thank you to remember that.”

“How could I possibly forget,” Poe laughs and lets go of Finn to lean across the table and smack a wet kiss on Jess’ forehead while she makes noises of deep protest and pulls faces.
In the commotion Finn’s jarred out of place, shifting sideways to accommodate Poe’s whole torso being flung across the table. He almost doesn’t hear it over all the noise Jess and Poe are making, and his own giggles, but Iolo does and reaches over to tap him on the hand.

“I think you dropped something,” he says, nodding to the floor.

Finn scoots back and, sure enough, the rings have fallen out of his pocket and are currently spinning around on the floor. He ducks under the table and picks them up, taking a second to palm them carefully, before reemerging and dropping them on the table. They make a high pitched noise as they hit the surface metal and Poe abruptly drops down into his seat when he catches sight of them.

“Are those…,” he starts but doesn’t finish, his voice running out halfway through.

Finn nods carefully. “They were given to me today by a lady from engineering, I didn’t catch her name.” He regrets not asking now, and resolves to thank her and introduce himself properly next time he’s down there.

He nudges one of the rings in Poe’s direction and he watches him pick it up, fingers gentle on the cool metal. He’s staring at it wide eyed, his mouth dropped open, and he’s not said a word.

“Well it’s about damned time,” Jess breaks the silence. “It’s been, what? Three weeks since you two tied the knot? You gotta make proper honest men out of each other.”

Poe blinks at her, then down at the ring, and then, finally, at Finn. He can’t read what’s in Poe’s eyes and he keeps his own face as neutral as possible, when really he’s sweating bullets in his nervousness, his heart beating fast and feeling like it’s rattling around his ribcage. He takes Finn’s wrist and pulls his hand over and Finn pointedly doesn’t resist. Poe slides the gold band onto his fourth finger and then stares down at Finn’s hand for a second, his thumb brushing across the ring where it shifts and settles around Finn’s finger, not too loose and not too tight. Without warning, he lifts Finn’s hand and kisses the back of it slowly, his lips warm against Finn’s skin.

Finn feels his skin get hot immediately, biting his lip. Poe strokes his thumb across the ring again and then lifts his head to look him in the eyes. Finn finds that he can’t hold eye contact right now, and hurriedly breaks it, his gaze instead landing on the other ring still sitting on the table. He tugs his hand out of Poe’s grasp and, taking a deep breath, slides the ring onto the fourth finger of his friends left hand, taking a second to absorb the image of the gold against Poe’s light brown skin.

“You may now kiss the groom!” Jess cheers, clapping her hands, and Iolo puts down his fork and joins in, smiling.

Finn suddenly can’t do this. He stands up abruptly and Jess and Iolo’s applause dies down in their confusion. He pauses for a moment, fists clenched, feeling the bite of the cool metal on his finger.

“We need to talk,” he whispers finally, fast and hushed, and the tips of Poe’s ears go red as he nods his head, pushing away from the table.

“Be right back,” he mumbles to Jess and Iolo who are looking between them in bewilderment, a concerned furrow deep in Iolo’s forehead. Finn attempts a smile to assure their friends but he feels that it’s not so convincing, considering how Iolo’s brow furrows even further.

They make their way out of the mess hall, shoulders tense and hands dangling at their sides, not touching. Finn feels stiff with anticipation, his gut rolling and flipping over and over. He realises that Poe’s leading him over to the corridor that they originally hashed out the plan to pretend to be married, and he dumbly thinks of how appropriate is is to be here once again.
Once the coast is clear, Poe rounds on him. “Are you okay?” he asks, voice strained and eyes concerned.

Finn’s own voice sticks in his throat looking into Poe’s eyes. They’re still his favourite colour, so warm and comforting. They make him feel safe when he looks into them, and now is no different. It takes everything he has not to crumple right there and then and fall forwards into Poe’s arms.

He straightens his spine. He can do this.

“I don’t know where this is going,” he says finally. The wording isn’t quite right but he doesn’t know what else to say.

Poe swallows and Finn can see the way it makes his adam’s apple bob in his throat. “Are you not happy?”

“No, I am,” Finn hurries to assure him. “I am, of course I am, I’m with you. It’s just that this,” he lifts his hand up and waggles the finger with the ring on it, “Is very official, and it’s starting to make me feel weird, lying to everyone.”

Poe looks lost for a second, his eyes wild. His gaze is glued to the ring on Finn’s finger, and Finn lets his hand fall and instead reaches out and grabs Poe’s hand, tangling their fingers together and squeezing.

“You feel weird,” Poe repeats in a faint voice.

“Everything about this is weird for me. Well, not weird, but…” he searches for the word. “New. All of it is so new, everything here is so new, and I don’t think I’m quite caught up yet.”

Poe bites his lip and studies Finn’s face carefully. Apparently satisfied with what he sees there, his shoulders slump and he steps forward, letting go of Finn’s hand to put his arms around his waist and pull him into a soft hug. Finn lets himself return it gratefully, taking strength from the warmth of Poe’s embrace and the solidity of his body.

“I’m sorry you feel that way, buddy,” he whispers into Finn’s shoulder.

Finn tightens his fingers where they’re resting on the back of Poe’s neck. “I’m glad it’s you,” he confesses. “If it were anyone else I’d be even more scared.”

“Scared?” Poe’s voice sounds weak.

“Like I said, it’s new. And back there Jess said kiss and my brain just stopped working.”

Poe pulls back but keeps his arms around Finn’s waist, holding him steady. “We don’t have to do that,” he says in a hushed voice. Anything louder and Finn feels like it would burst the little bubble they’ve cocooned themselves in.

“I don’t want to pressure you into anything,” he continues. “You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to.”

Finn can feel his face heat up a little. Poe’s rubbing reassuring circles into the small of Finn’s back and it’s incredibly distracting, his fingers firm but gentle, making Finn feel like he’s going to melt right down into the floor.

“I want to,” he says quickly. His brain abruptly goes fuzzy at the implications of that statement. “I mean,” he hurries to say, “I’ll be wanting to kiss people in the future, surely. But I have zero
experience,” he laughs nervously.

It’s not like he’s got anyone else to kiss, or even anyone else he wants to kiss. His mind has been circling the idea of Poe’s lips for some time now, ever since Poe had kissed his cheek in the hangar bay, but he hasn’t let himself think about it too much for fear of getting lost in it and never being able to find his way back. His heart already feels so full of Poe that he doesn’t know what will happen if he adds kissing to the mix. He knows that he and Poe are affectionate with each other and often casually drape themselves across one another, enjoying being able to touch. It’s more often now that Finn wakes up with Poe’s back to his chest, their breathing in rhythm and their feet tangled, Finn’s hand resting on Poe’s stomach underneath his shirt, the skin warm and soft from sleep. Finn can only imagine how soft Poe’s lips would be underneath his, and his whole body feels hot whenever he does, so he doesn’t do it often. He just doesn’t know if Poe would like to do that too, and he’s too scared to ask in case it ends with him calling Rey at some ungodly hour in the morning and sobbing intelligibly over the vidlink.

Poe’s let go of his waist and taken a step back, running his hand through his hair when Finn tunes back in. He notices that it’s the hand with the ring on his finger, the gold peeking through Poe’s dark brown curls, and his stomach feels suddenly floppy.

“I mean, we could,” Poe gestures expressively, his eyes on his feet. “We could… Practice? Like, practice the kissing if that would make you feel less scared.”

“Practice,” Finn repeats numbly. “Like, for when I want to kiss other people, that kind of practice.”

Poe’s lips take on a tight edge but he nods quickly. “That kind of practice, exactly.”

Finn breathes out slowly, considering. On the one hand, he’ll get to kiss Poe and score some quality knowledge in the lips and tongue capacity. On the other hand, there is literally no one else he’d like to kiss, and he would once again be going along with another lie.

It’s probably a terrible idea. Some mornings Finn has to take some extra time to just lie in bed and ache, thinking about Poe, when his friend is splayed out right beside him. What if this is something silly to Poe, to pass the time and help out a friend? Poe’s kind like that, always warm hearted, always wanting to do the right thing. If Finn takes him up on it then he’ll be knowingly deceiving him, using his friend for his own selfish purposes.

But then again: he really wants to kiss him.

“What do you think?” Poe says lowly, carefully, and his eyes are searching Finn’s face quickly like he’s trying to figure out exactly what he’s thinking.

“Let’s do it,” he blurs and feels his stomach drop quickly down to somewhere in the vicinity of his boots.

“Really?” Poe seems surprised, wide eyed and blinking rapidly. As if Finn could say no, as if he’d be able to resist. Poe shuffles forward until they’re toe to toe, and reaches out to hold both of Finn’s hands between them, rubbing his thumb across the back of the skin there in what Finn’s sure is meant to be a reassuring manner but really is only making his heart thump against his ribs so hard it actually hurts.

He’s looking into Finn’s eyes like he’s searching for any strains of hesitancy or a sign that he really doesn’t want to do this, but Finn feels helpless to prevent himself from doing this incredibly stupid thing when presented with Poe looking so sweet, his lips open and inviting. Poe leans in, just a fraction, and tips his chin up so he can press his lips gently, ever so gently, against Finn’s own.
There’s barely any pressure at all, and Poe’s lips hover over his for a few seconds, before he pressing back in again, more firmly. He tilts his head and opens his mouth just a little and it’s soft and wet and Finn’s brain grinds to a slow halt. Everything narrows down to the feeling of Poe’s lips against his own, and they kiss maybe a dozen times, just slowly and carefully. Poe lets go of one of his hands to lift his fingers to Finn’s jaw, lightly pressing his fingertips there like he can’t quite make himself touch any harder. Finn clutches at Poe’s waist and squeezes his hand, his body tense even though his brain and his heart feel like jelly. With his eyes closed he wants to stay right here forever, feeling Poe’s breath fan over his cheeks and his stubble scrape over Finn’s skin, his lips so lovely and soft.

Just as he’s thinking it, people clatter their way down the corridor and he and Poe jump apart like scared animals, blinking wildly around. Finn feels like he’s just woken up from the most satisfying sleep of his life and his brain hasn’t quite rebooted itself yet. He can feel the heat that was beginning to creep up his neck flare fully across his cheeks.

“That was…” Poe mumbles, and his cheeks are pink to match the heightened colour of his lips. Yes, it definitely was, Finn thinks. He breathes deeply, trying to calm his pounding heart, and resists the urge to lick his lips.

Poe rubs the back of his neck and eyes the group of people making their way down the corridor.

“We should get back,” he says, still blushing, but making eye contact with Finn. He feels like he should be able to read something in Poe’s eyes, but they tell him nothing, and he can only nod and follow Poe closely back into the mess hall where they finish the rest of their meal in silence with Jess and Iolo, their cheeks red and their pinky fingers touching on the bench they share.

The walk back to their room is fraught with a strange tension that Finn can’t put his finger on. He feels like if he were to touch Poe right now he’d get shocked, like the connection of their skin would race through his veins like electricity and light up his nervous system, rendering him speechless. It’s not like he’s saying anything right now, both of them silent, so it wouldn’t make much of a difference.

His mind turns to the search that he’d done weeks ago, when all of this first started. Everything he’d read about intimacy and romance had made his stomach flip flop and his heart ache strangely, and he’d had to put down the datareader for fear that he’d stop breathing if he carried on.

All the things he’d read about being a good husband he was already doing with Poe. Maybe being a good spouse just means being their best friend, with added kissing and touching. Other things Finn wouldn’t let himself think about. But now he’s touched Poe’s lips with his own mind won’t stop coming back to all the articles he’d read diligently late at night, with PEN-E powered down and only his increasingly panicked thoughts to keep himself company.

Panicky as he was then, he feels strangely calm now. Like they’ve come full circle almost. Perhaps somewhere in his brain he was keeping a subconscious checklist of all the things he’d learned about being a good husband and it’s now going, intimacy can be ticked off, good job Finn. Maybe that’s why he doesn’t feel strange now that he knows what it feels like to press his lips to Poe’s, or maybe it’s just Poe making him feel that way. The comfort of learning new and scary things with his best friend holding his hand is keeping the well of anxiety away.

He really wants to kiss him again.

But will he be allowed to, now? Now that his first official lips-to-lips kiss is out of the way, will Poe deem his education over and set him free and into the wild? Obviously, he couldn’t kiss anyone else because they’re still pretending to be married. Finn doesn’t want to kiss anyone else. His mind turns
to Rey and he feels weird thinking of her like that. He doesn’t think Rey has any interest at all in kissing people, let alone Finn. She’s his best friend, but in a different way to Poe. Is there a word for a best friend who you want to kiss for the rest of your life? Finn wracks his brain but comes up with nothing. Poe is just Poe, to him, and every emotion that comes with him Finn takes gladly, even if they do hurt his heart sometimes.

Poe is silent next to him, his brows furrowed together like he’s thinking hard about something. There’s only a few more turns until they reach the door of their quarters and Finn wonders desperately what will happen when they’re alone together in the room. With a bed.

His mind screeches to a halt and he blinks rapidly, trying to dispel the path of his thoughts. Having Poe’s lips touch his seems to have broken a dam in his brain that was holding back a whole hoard of wicked images and fantasies that he didn’t even know he wanted. His subconscious has been busy, it seems, taking in every time Poe bites his lips or spreads his hands, the way his thighs had looked in that pair of shorts, the rash of thick stubble on his cheeks and throat in the early morning. Finn tries to clamp down on it all as fast as he can, worried that something will slip and he’ll ruin everything. He’d never forgive himself if he stretched too far and Poe didn’t rise up to meet him.

He realises suddenly that this is the first time he’s ever felt anything like this. He’s felt desire, sure: desire to get out and away, desire to help, to find, to save, but desire for another person is entirely unfamiliar to him. He hasn’t let himself think properly about it until right here right now, walking down the hallways with the object of his desire by his side after they’ve just kissed. His first kiss. That’s monumental for him. A wave of emotions is rising inside him and he’s trying his best to coast along with it but it feels like it’s rushing through him faster than he can manage, slipping through his fingers like sand. He doesn’t want to let Poe slip through his fingers, but he doesn’t know how to get him to stay, like this, forever.

Well, not exactly like this, silent as they are, the tension thick between them. Finn peeks over at Poe but his friend is staring dead ahead. Finn can’t read anything in his face. His eyes settle on the gold band sitting innocently on Poe’s finger beside him and his chest tightens. To have the cold metal touch his skin while Poe was holding his face so gently earlier was a sharp reminder that none of this is real.

He suspects he’ll wake up tomorrow and the ache in his ribs that he usually feels will be intensified a hundred times, a thousand more likely, but he has to get through this evening first to find out.

They reach their door and Poe punches in the code quickly, like he can’t wait to get into the room. Finn follows him dutifully, his feet feeling heavy and thick, like they want to stay in this spot right here outside the doorway and move no further, but Finn musters up the thin threads of his courage and shuts the door behind them.

Neither of them turn on the lights. In the dark, all Finn can hear is their breathing, out of sync and heavy in the silence. Then, lightly, Finn feels Poe’s fingers touch his own. He grips them gratefully, the familiar feel of Poe’s hand in his own helping to ground him as his heart beats fast in his chest.

Keeping a hold of his hand, Poe flicks on the lights and looks at Finn carefully, like he’s considering something. He toes off his shoes and Finn follows, kicking them into the corner and not caring about where they land, keeping his eyes on Poe. He bites his lip and Finn breathes in sharply, his mind turning to all the thoughts he’d just had about running his tongue over the indentations Poe’s teeth leave whenever he makes the gesture.

“Do you want to…?” Poe whispers and Finn has no clear idea of what he’s actually asking but he nods his head fervently anyway and Poe steps forward, closing in on him until they’re chest to chest and Finn can feel the heat of his body so close.
He lifts his hand and places it tentatively on the small of Poe’s back, rubbing circles there like his friend had done for him earlier. A rush of air leaves Poe’s nose and he licks his lips. Helplessly, Finn’s eyes track the movement and he leans in, like he’s being magnetically pulled towards Poe.

He hesitates though, hovering over Poe’s lips uncertainly. He doesn’t want to go any further in case there’s no turning back. Poe drops his hold on his hand and raises both palms to place them against Finn’s shoulders, warm and reassuring, spreading his fingers out and squeezing gently. Shifting on his feet and swaying closer, Finn curls one of his fingers under Poe’s chin and tilts his head up, pressing his lips softly against his friend’s.

There’s something startlingly earnest in the way that Poe angles his head and breathes in deep at the touch of their lips. Finn inches a little closer and slides his hand across Poe’s jaw until his fingers are buried in the thick hair behind his ear. Poe opens his mouth and nudes at Finn’s lips until he does so too, his lips soft and a little bit wet. Finn has no idea what he’s doing so he follows Poe’s lead blindly, his heart pounding against his ribs. Surely Poe can feel that?

Poe makes a faint noise, like a hum, and it vibrates over Finn’s lips in a way that makes him shiver. He moves his hand up Poe’s back slowly, and Poe makes an approving noise and sucks Finn’s bottom lip into his mouth. Finn’s brain goes blank and he feels himself shudder, his fingers tightening in the curls of Poe’s hair.

He’s breathing harshly when he pulls back, eyes blinking and readjusting to the light. Poe has a blush high on his cheeks like before and he swallows heavily, flexing his hands on Finn’s shoulders.

“I need to sit down.” Finn murmurs faintly and Poe exhales a soft laugh, his eyes crinkling at the corners. He nudges Finn over to the bed because apparently he’s incapable of proper functioning right now and he sits heavily on the mattress. Poe stands between his legs and cups his face and they’re kissing again, slow and soft, and Finn gets a bit lost in it.

He feels a little dizzy, like after he’d drank all those little shot glasses filled with alcohol, and he loses track of time as Poe’s lips brush over his. Poe starts to suck on his lips again, making them wet and swollen, then pulls off to breathe deeply, his eyes still closed and his brow furrowed like he’s concentrating really hard, before he leans in again and licks across Finn’s lips with his tongue.

Finn sucks in a sharp breath in shock, his mouth dropping open, and Poe’s tongue is licking into his mouth, overwhelming him completely. Finn doesn’t know what to do, panicking for a second. Poe pulls back and traces his thumb over Finn’s bottom lip gently, and he can only imagine that he looks a complete mess, eyes wide and lips swollen.

His hands are clenched in the sheets on the mattress and he carefully stretches them out to relieve their tension and twists them into the collar of Poe’s shirt.

“I can’t- my back is hurting my like this can you,” he nods his head in the direction of the pillows, “Maybe scooch back for me?”

Finn nods dumbly because his brain is stuck on how hoarse Poe’s voice sounds right now. Usually light and feathery, his voice has dropped several octaves and sounds raspy, and it makes Finn’s heart squeeze tightly in his chest.

Poe crawls over him once he’s laid down stiffly and immediately presses his mouth to Finn’s again. Finn is torn between the sensation of Poe’s warm mouth sucking at his lips and the feeling of his thighs straddling Finn’s hips, the weight of him as he presses down. His hands move to splay over Finn’s ribs and Finn knows that Poe can feel his heart beating frantically for sure now.
Poe licks into his mouth again and Finn, following the instinctive feeling, returns the gesture, propping himself up on his elbows and presses his lips more firmly to Poe’s.

The inside of his mouth is weird and wet and warm, and Finn’s brain spins in circles as he tries to mimic the movement that Poe’s making inside his own mouth. His tongue flicks briefly over the back of Poe’s teeth and Poe makes a guttural noise, low in his throat, and Finn does it again and again until Poe pulls sharply back, breathing hard.

Finn drops back so he’s flat on the bed again and after a few seconds of looking down at him, Poe follows. His elbows dig into the pillow on either side of Finn’s ears and his breath fans out across his lips.

“This okay?” he whispers, still panting.

Finn swallows thickly. “It’s okay,” he sighs and lifts his hands to bury them in Poe’s hair. Poe’s eyes close like he’s in ecstasy when Finn rubs his fingers firmly into his scalp, and Finn can’t help but drag him down for more kisses.

Poe strokes his thumbs carefully along Finn’s cheekbones as they kiss, slow and heated, for who knows how long. Poe’s teeth scrape across his bottom lip at one point and Finn surprises himself by groaning but Poe just grins and comes back for more.

He starts to relax, his fingers gentling to brush through Poe’s curls as he melts back into the mattress. Poe, perched over his lap and leaning in as he is, ends up with their chests resting together and they breathe in tandem. Finn bites his bottom lip and immediately soothes across it with his tongue and it makes Poe gasp wetly, and Finn can feel his toes curl where they’re pressed against the tops of his thighs.

Their kisses turn lazy and thick, and Finn’s lost track of time completely when Poe pulls back and pushes himself up and off Finn’s lap to lie down next to him. Staring blankly at the ceiling, Finn’s whole body feels cold now that Poe’s not on top of him, his slight body pinning him down.

Poe’s floppy next to him, his eyes hazy and lips puffed up and red. He looks like he’s lost in his own world and Finn doesn’t quite know how to reach him, so he just lies there and looks at the side of Poe’s face, flushed from what they just did. His shirt has ridden up a little from where he was pressed against Finn so tightly and Finn can see the brown of his stomach, his sharp hipbones, the small trail of hair underneath his belly button. He feels briefly saddened that he didn’t get to touch Poe’s waist, to frame it between his hands and feel him breathing.

Poe eventually turns his head and meets Finn’s gaze, blushing. “Sorry about that,” and Finn makes a noise of confusion and protest, because Poe definitely doesn’t have anything to be sorry for right now.

“I get lost sometimes,” he continues and spreads his hands, “In my head.”

Finn nods and Poe smiles like he’s relieved.

“I can’t right now, but maybe, tomorrow? We could continue?”

“Yes, of course, I’d be up for that, tomorrow, yes,” Finn babbles in his enthusiasm and Poe giggles breathlessly, dragging himself up until he’s sitting and running his fingers through his hair. His curls are a mess and he looks like he’s just stuck his fingers in an electricity socket. Finn wonders if the scratches of Poe’s stubble will show up on his skin. Even if they don’t, he’ll still be able to feel it throughout the next day, a constant reminder.
“Where’s Beebee-Ate? And Penny?” Poe asks and Finn suddenly remembers that, hey, other beings exist outside of him and Poe at this very moment.

He looks at his watch and his eyes widen at how much time has passed. Almost an hour they’ve spent kissing and touching lazily, spread out on the bed. Finn thumps back onto the bed, thinking that if he has to go out and find their droids then he’s not going to get much sleep at all, late as it is.

As if he’s reading his mind, Poe slides off the bed and pulls on his boots. “You stay, I’ll find them. You’ve got an early shift tomorrow, right? You should get some sleep.”

Finn looks at him for a moment and then nods carefully. He can’t quite form words right now. Poe grins and steps towards the door, but stops, his hand hovering in the air. He spins around quickly and darts over to press and soft kiss against Finn’s lips.

“Sleep well,” he murmurs, his lips only a fraction of space away from Finn’s own so he can feel the buzz of the words on his skin.

Numbly, he watches Poe cross the room and leave, the door sliding quietly shut behind him. Finn swallows and breathes out slowly, bringing his fingers up to touch his lips. His body feels foreign, his skin too tight like he’s outgrown it somehow.

He shakes his head and slowly winds his way through his evening routine, changing into his pyjamas and brushing his teeth. Poe’s shirt he’s wearing has a string of numbers and symbols across the chest, some equation that Finn’s too tired to try and understand. When he looks at himself in the mirror he finds that he doesn’t look any different. Maybe it’s just the way he feels, like his bones have been shaken out of his skin and put back in a different order.

He flicks the light off and slides into bed, sighing. The bed feels empty without Poe, and he still feels cold, so he stretches the blankets up to his chin and curls up tightly, concentrating on his own breathing until he gets dragged under to sleep.

His shift at the medbay the next day passes in a blur, like most things have that day. He woke up with Poe curled up under his chin, breathing onto his collarbones, his eyelashes long and sweeping across the tops of his cheeks, and he’d had to freeze for a moment and breathe through the ache in his chest.

Getting dressed and ready and waking up PEN-E had happened in a hazy, dreamlike kind of way, and even though PEN-E chirped happily about her time with BB-8 the previous evening, Finn’s brain was slow to respond. He’s fumbling and graceless the entire day, almost giving himself a heart attack when he nearly steps on PEN-E, and she beeps loudly at him, asking if he’s okay.

“I’m a bit,” he starts but he finds that he doesn’t have the words to finish the sentence properly. He waves his hands about madly, frantically, like that somehow represents the explosive feelings currently sitting under his breastbone, and PEN-E just tilts her head up at him he hears the whir of her lens zooming in on his face.

“I’m weird Penny, you knew that already,” he mutters.

[Strange, Friend-Finn. So human] she beeps at him and he smiles. Holding conversations with PEN-E is always a trip and never fails to make him feel better. He resolves to pay more attention to her and to properly respond when she beeps at him and they pass the morning this way, chatting nonsense with patients and patching up cuts and bruises, but somewhere in the back of his head he’s
still thinking about last night, constantly, and he just can’t turn it off.

It’s like he’s changed, and no one else has noticed. He feels clearer now he’s finally unlocked that part of him that he didn’t know was screaming its desire for Poe.

He’d left his friend sleeping soundly in their bed, his sheets bunched up around him and his hair in disarray on the pillow, mouth soft and eyes moving fast behind his eyelids. Finn had hardly been able to drag himself away, now that he knows that he wants him.

Poe comes in at about midday to have lunch with Finn as he always does, and they talk about nothing in particular as PEN-E and BB-8 beep at each other in the background. Finn’s eyes hover over Poe’s mouth, his hands as they move, the way that his hair curls gently behind his ears and on the nape of his neck. His orange jumpsuit bunches in around his waist where the elastic runs through the material and Finn wants to press his hands there like he didn’t get to last night.

When Poe rises to leave, Finn follows him up and Poe smiles happily. He places a hand to Finn’s cheek and kisses him, right there in the medbay, sucking softly on Finn’s lip and breathing deeply like he wants to savour it. Finn almost melts into the floor, his hands reaching out and splaying over Poe’s waist like he wanted to, and it’s only the sound of the other nurses whistling that brings him back to the present. Poe pulls away and smiles softly, leaning in to press a familiar quick kiss to Finn’s cheek, before nudging BB-8 softly to leave. Finn’s eyes follow him as he goes.

The rest of his shift is just as much of a blur as the first half of it, and Ferran all but hoists him out of there mid-afternoon because his head is stuck so far in the clouds. He and PEN-E make their way down to engineering and he makes sure to thank the lady, Maeve, he learns, for the rings she gave them. She glows a happy green and strokes a finger over the ring when Finn shows her how perfectly it fits, and he can’t help the bubbly feeling he gets in his chest when he looks at the gold metal on his finger and thinks about the matching band on Poe’s.

Digging through the scrap doesn’t turn up a motherboard, so Finn scoops up PEN-E and goes back to his room to finish the rest of the binary exercises the General had sent him, adding a note that they would be the last as he’s made such quick progress. He eats with his friends, holds Poe’s hand on the way back to their room, and then quietly reads a book until it’s time to get ready for bed and for PEN-E and BB-8 to power down.

In the dark, under the covers, Poe’s lips find his and they kiss again until Finn’s lips feel too sensitive and his skin too raw from Poe’s stubble to continue. They trade slow, shallow kisses lying on their sides in the middle of the bed, until they both drop off to sleep.

The next day goes much the same. Poe spends his time in the planning rooms with his squad and a few Generals, trying to pin down a flight path and a solid plan for their next run, but he joins Finn at lunch as always, and kisses him goodbye when he leaves. It’s Taungsday again, the last of the third month, so he and his friends gather in the room with the squishy sofa and bicker over what movies to watch.

They watch some weird space comedy and then an action movie that Snap gets really into, and halfway through Poe turns his head to kiss Finn’s cheek. Finn automatically turns to face Poe and Poe leans in and sucks Finn’s bottom lip straight into his mouth like he just can’t wait. Finn flails for a second, but they fall into their easy rhythm, and he ends up stretched out across Poe on the sofa, Poe’s legs spread to accommodate Finn’s hips, his hand in Finn’s hair. Finn’s got his own hand high up on Poe’s thigh, resisting the temptation to slip his fingers up the hem of Poe’s shorts.

He flicks his tongue against Poe’s teeth and Poe gasps, whimpered, arching up against Finn and Jess throws a handful of nuts at them and tells them to cut it out.
“I don’t wanna see that,” she rolls her eyes and Finn and Poe pull away from each other, shy and sitting upright once again. Poe slips his hand into Finn’s and squeezes, and Finn can feel the coolness of the ring resting against his skin.

“How long does the honeymoon period last, exactly? How much longer do we have to put up with Mr. and Mr. Dameron making out all over the place, do you think?” Karé muses and Finn’s face feels so hot he has to duck his chin and hope no one else notices.

Jess shakes her head. “You two are so disgustingly in love,” she complains and Snap shushes her harshly as he tries to listen to what the main character is saying on screen.

Finn’s stomach flips over and he wants the ground to open up and swallow him. In love, he thinks dazedly. Karé makes a good point: how long is Poe going to keep kissing him for? What happens when he says their practice is over and stops sucking on Finn’s lips until they’re swollen and moaning against his mouth, pressing light kisses to his jaw and his throat while Finn tries desperately to catch his breath. It’s only been three days, and Finn’s already addicted. He suspects he became a goner the moment Poe’s lips touched his, and there’s nothing he can do about it now.

A knock on the door jars him out of his thoughts and all their heads snap up to find a young officer holding a datareader peering in anxiously.

“There’s some new intel,” he says hurriedly, and all the pilots groan and lift themselves up out of their seats, Snap grumbling about not being able to finish the movie. Iolo carefully tips PEN-E into Finn’s open palms and pats her on the head and she turns and whistles at his as he leaves.

“Sorry about this,” Poe says and stretches to his feet. BB-8 has turned of their projector and is waiting at the door for Poe to join them, so Poe presses a kiss to the top of Finn’s head and strokes his thumb across his cheekbone gently.

“I’ll be back later, don’t wait up,” he says and Finn hums.

“Be safe,” he grins. “And say hello to the General for me, would you?”

Poe snaps him a sloppy salute and is out the door, BB-8 whirring [Goodbye, Friend-Finn and Droid-PEN-E] before following their owner in a blur of orange and white.

Finn sighs and taps PEN-E on the head and she spins around to look at him. “Just you and me,” he whispers, and she beeps sadly.

“Am I that bad company?” he laughs, faking hurt as he flutters a hand to his chest like he’s been mortally wounded. PEN-E spins her head quickly and flashes her torchlight on and off to reassure him, buzzing pleasantly in his palm.

When he makes his way back to his room and deposits PEN-E on her little cushion next to the weird plant thing, there’s a message blinking on the vidscreen, waiting for him.

[Missed call: REY] it says and he scrambles to pull it up. It was only a few minutes ago so he hits redial and waits for the connection to go through, drumming his fingers impatiently on the desk. He hasn’t managed to speak to Rey for a few days and he’s bursting to tell her what’s been going on.

“Finn!” she cries happily when the picture comes through, smiling broadly. He can’t help but smile back as always, so happy to see her. He can’t wait until they’re reunited in person and he can hug her tightly for as long as he can. He misses her so much sometimes it feels like the same ache he gets in the mornings when he looks at Poe.
“I have so much to tell you-”

“So do I,” he babbles and her eyes light up. “But you go first,” he nods and settles in for another one of Rey’s amazing stories about Luke Skywalker and the Force.

“I stopped Luke’s lightsaber,” she grins. “We’re practicing my control over objects with the Force and I stopped him, Finn! I closed my eyes and I felt the Force pulling itself around me and when I opened them he was frozen, his lightsaber in mid arc.”

Finn gasps, imagining the scene in his mind. He doesn’t know how Rey does it, but he has no doubt in his mind that it’s all true. He believes in her, fully and strongly, and every story she tells him just makes him believe harder. He can’t wait for the day she kicks Ren’s ass into oblivion. Jedi Knight Rey sounds so awesome.

“It was only for a few seconds, because he’s way stronger than me, but I did it!” she continues. “He smiled at me and everything, it was amazing.”

The dimple in her cheek is showing and her eyes are so bright and happy, a flush high on her cheeks. Stray hairs wisp around her face, her hair pulled up in three loops like it always is, like it’s the only style she knows how to do, and Finn absently wonders for a second what would happen if they let the General loose on Rey’s hair.

“That’s so cool, Rey, congratulations,” he gushes and she scrunches up her nose in her happiness.

“Enough about me though, what’s your news?” she asks eagerly.

He groans lowly and rubs his fingers over his eyes, starting from the beginning and winding his way through the tale, watching Rey’s brow furrow further and further until he’s afraid it’s going to stick that way permanently.

“So now I’m sort of stuck,” he bemoans, “In this weird limbo where I’m so happy one minute I could cry and then the next minute I come crashing down because it all could end before I know it.”

“I see what you mean,” she says slowly.

He runs his eyes across her face, taking in its familiar lines and curves, and grounding himself in the safety he feels when he’s with her. Rey knows a good chunk of his secrets, and the only reason why she doesn’t know all of them is because he’s somewhat reluctant to drag up memories of his time in the First Order. He knows only the surface of Rey, probably deeper than anyone else but it’s still barely there, because she holds onto her life before he met her so tightly he’s afraid she’ll never open up and tell him. But he’s happy with this, sharing stories of their days and basking in their mutual enthusiasm for each other. It’s simple and easy and he feels safe with her and that’s all he really needs.

“Okay, listen to me Finn,” she says finally and he perks up, nodding and concentrating hard. “Do you remember when I was trying to fix the leaky gas on the Falcon, and I said I wanted to go back to Jakku, and you asked why?” He nods slowly, not sure where she’s going with this.

“Do you remember how you asked me what’s back there for me, if I had a boyfriend, a cute boyfriend?” He cringes on the inside and nods again and she keeps steady eye contact with him like it’s important.

“I want you to ask yourself now: do you have a boyfriend, a cute boyfriend?”

Finn blinks. What, exactly, does she mean? Does she mean Poe? Because Poe is his friend, who’s
helping him out whilst also pretending to be his husband in a strange charade they have going with the entire base.

“No?” he says uncertainly.

She purses her lips and makes a sound of annoyance. “Try again,” she implores. “You hold hands with him, you sleep next to him, you kiss him repeatedly and enjoy it. You seem to have adopted a droid with him. You’re both happy when you’re around each other, he brings you lunch, introduced you to his friends, and constantly touches you. You like the way he looks when he laughs, and your heart beats faster when you’re around him. I ask you again: do you have a boyfriend, a cute boyfriend?”

Finn gasps. “Oh my god, I have a cute boyfriend!”

“There it is,” Rey smiles smugly. Finn rakes a hand roughly through his hair, scratching his head, because he can’t believe he never realised this before.

“We’re dating,” he hisses and Rey nods slowly.

“Not only that, but you’re married,” she says, pointing to his ring.

He fiddles with it for a second. “Not really, though,” he says sadly. They never signed anything official, everyone just assumed.

Rey frowns at him. He reaches a hand out like he’s going to smooth out the corners of her lips before realising it’s a vid and she’s really miles and miles away.

“Do you think that he knows that we’re dating?”

“He’d be an idiot if he didn’t,” she replies point blank. “And I know Poe’s not an idiot, so you two need to actually communicate with each other and sort this out.”

Communication. That was one of the things listed that you needed to do to be a good husband. Finn realises that he’s failed miserably at it, choosing to keep his feelings bottled up instead of sharing them with Poe in a healthy way. He was too scared that Poe wouldn’t feel the same, but with Rey’s words he thinks maybe there’s a chance he does.

She smiles at him gently. “Please figure this out so when I finally come to see you you’re happy and not sad.”

“I’m always happy around you,” he protests and she snorts.

“What about those moments when you were yelling at me, hm?”

“Okay, that was an anomalous situation, I think you should cut me some slack there,” he says and she giggles brightly.

“I miss you,” he sighs, just like he does in every conversation they have.

“I miss you too,” she echoes and smiles at him with kind eyes.

“Go,” he motions, “Go be awesome without me.”

“I’m even more awesome with you,” she reassures and he chuckles, shaking his head fondly.

“May the force be with you, Finn,” she signs off and he repeats the sentence back to her, smiling
until the picture cuts out.

The clock on the desk tells him that it’s about time for sleep, and Poe’s still not back yet, so he pushes away from the desk to change into his pyjamas, listening to PEN-E whistle goodnight as she powers down. He brushes his teeth and pads over to bed, climbing in and pulling the covers up to his chin, wondering what Poe’s doing right now. It must be important if it’s to do with their next run, and he lets the spool of worry held tightly in his chest unfurl and spread through his limbs, turning them heavy. He really hopes that the run will be easy, that Poe won’t have to fight, that he’ll come back grinning and not a scratch on his shiny X-Wing.

He drops off to sleep thinking about Poe’s smile and is shaken awake who knows how long later by Poe’s hands on his shoulders. Groggily, he fumbles to get up but Poe pushes him back down and shushes him.

“It’s very early in the morning,” he whispers. “We have a plan ready to go and we have to act on the intel soon, so I’m heading out.”

Finn whimpers, unable to do anything but clutch at Poe’s shirt and drag him closer. Poe obliges, kneeling over him in the dark, stroking Finn’s hair.

“I’ll be gone about five days, and it’s mostly radio silence, so you may not hear from me. I wanted to say goodbye before I go,” his voice drops even lower, hushed between them.

“Please be careful,” Finn manages. “Come back to me.”

“Always,” Poe murmurs and leans forward to press a warm kiss against Finn’s mouth. Finn sucks in a breath and chases his lips, unwilling to end the kiss and have to watch Poe walk away.

“I’ll be back, I promise,” Poe mumbles against his mouth, breathing deep and slow.

He leans in to kiss Finn again like he just can’t help it, gravity pulling him down, and Finn tries to savour the moment. He realises that his camera isn’t up and functioning yet, so he still doesn’t have a picture of Poe just in case anything happens.

“I promise,” Poe says again, so quiet that Finn almost doesn’t hear it. His lips move like he’s saying something else, but in the dark Finn can’t see what. He curls his fingers in Poe’s soft hair and pulls him down one last time.

Poe gently untangles himself from Finn’s hold and stares down at him for a moment, his eyes soft and unreadable in the low light. He strokes his thumb across Finn’s cheekbone and murmurs his last goodbye, and then he’s out the room, the door slipping silently closed behind him like he was never there.

Finn rolls over and buries himself in Poe’s pillow, breathing in his friend’s sweet scent, and in the morning when he wakes up he’s alone and the pillow doesn’t smell like Poe anymore.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

“You love him, and you miss him, and you’re justified to be worried,” Enif says, “But don’t forget that those five days were just a guideline, so I wouldn’t worry too much.” “When’s it okay to start properly worrying?” he shoots back before he can stop himself. Enif looks shocked, but he continues, gritting his teeth. “Seven days? Or is that too soon? Nine days? Or how about a dozen, can I start panicking then?”

Chapter Notes

i'm so sorry about the wait and also. about this chapter. you'll see soon. i'm sorry.

It’s six days and fourteen hours until Finn hears anything about Poe, or his squad.

He spends those days walking around like a ghost, like someone who’s lost a limb and hasn’t quite come to terms with it yet, as if his body hasn’t caught up with his mind. He knows Poe has gone, and yet he still expects to see him every time he rounds the corner into the messhall, or opens the door to their room, or sticks his head around the hangar bay doors. He forgets to eat lunch for the first two days, and Ferran has to gently nudge him and tell him that he’ll miss food if he doesn’t leave now. PEN-E beeps sadly when Finn strokes over her head, trying to distract himself from his shaking fingers when he realises that Poe’s not coming.

Why he’s so distraught, he doesn’t know. Poe flies out all the time, though he hasn’t been on a mission of this magnitude since the Starkiller base fiasco, what with the Resistance scrambling to establish their political footing in the wake of the destruction of the New Republic planets. The First Order base they destroyed was huge, and the planet’s held massive populations, so everyone’s still reeling from the shock and loss, but it seems the First Order have steadied themselves and started amassing new sponsors right under everyone’s noses. Finn knows that Poe is the best pilot they have, and that the General trusts him implicitly, and that the likelihood of a mission’s success increases tenfold when they place Poe in the squads, but it still makes something squirm around inside him, thinking about Poe in danger.

So he thinks about other things. He walks the hallways of the base and takes in the day-to-day life now that everyone has something clear to do. He whispers to PEN-E, cupped in his hands, and she beeps quietly back, missing both Poe and BB-8. He spends a great chunk of time in the hand-to-hand combat room, sweating through some of Poe’s weird t-shirts and perhaps getting a little too forceful with his opponents. He administers first aid, though, where it’s needed and apologises profusely for twisted ankles and bruises and tiny little half-moon cuts where his nails have dug in too hard. He never had that problem when he was a Stormtrooper, the gloves of the uniform big and bulky and not easy to do any fine motor-movement. He’s used to coming in strong and heavy, flat-handed jabs and bulky punches, whereas his most frequent sparring partner, Enif, dances around him like a spinning top, fast and light-footed, darting in and then away like a minnow. She laughs with blood in her teeth when Finn apologises over and over for punching her in the nose.
She teaches him how to fight up-close and dirty, when you have no weapon and are grappling to survive. He learns vulnerable spots, elbows and knees, eye sockets, and how to crack someone’s bones in half and incapacitate them. A tentacled and wobbly xir named U’lxo volunteers for these parts of the lessons, when Finn shrinks back from actually applying force to Enif’s forearm, and xir offers one of their many strangely solid limbs so Finn can practice snapping fake bones viciously. U’lxo gives a jolly chuckle when Finn asks xim if they’re hurt and wobbles over to practice throwing knives, limbs blurring.

Finn follows xir and learns how to fight with a knife, blade deadly and glinting in his palm. He drops it more often than not in the beginning, resulting in a quick trip to the medbay when the knife lands straight through his foot, him hopping about and trying to calm PEN-E’s alarmed beeps at all the blood. He picks it up quickly though, the blade twirling between his fingers as he learns to jab and block effectively up close with a small weapon in his hand, and it turns out that throwing sharp objects across the room and hearing them thudding solidly into the walls and sticking is actually incredibly satisfying.

He enjoys it most when he spars with March, though. The woman is huge and bulky and has no qualms about doing her best to flatten Finn into about the shape of Rey’s favourite biscuits. Finn lets himself get lost in their matches, his heart working hard in his chest and his eyes blurring with sweat as he throws punches and blocks them in turn, grappling and pushing and swiping March’s feet out from under her. After, they both lie on the mats in a sticky mess of heaving chests and wheezing breaths until Enif comes over and dumps water over their heads.

In between his hours at the medbay and his trips to the combat room, Finn tries his best to fill the days up so he doesn’t have to think about what he’s missing too much. He tries his hardest to look after the swaying plant that sits on the desk in their room, watering it and sometimes chatting to it until he catches himself and feels silly. He digs holes in the earth outside the base and plants the other saplings they were given as gifts next to what looks like a small but eclectic collection of greenery under a solid tree with silvery white bark and pretty blue and green leaves. Finn feels peaceful when he sits there, under the shade of the branches, PEN-E whizzing around and getting lost in the foliage. His chest aches when he thinks about how Poe would laugh at her and probably try to climb the tree while Finn would shout at him from the ground and wring his hands together with worry, eyes anxious.

Digging around furiously in the engineering bay reveals a motherboard that’ll fit his camera, and he happily assembles it, turning and clicking an image of PEN-E looking regal on her pink cushion. He laughs until he realises that the people he’d want to take pictures of aren’t here. So he goes out and takes a picture of the tree, then rounds up Enif, March, Howard, and U’lxo and gets some poor unsuspecting Ensign to take a group photo. Enif almost gets swallowed by March’s arms and Howard lives up to his name and jumps as high as he can in the air, so they have to take a few photos for it to work out properly. When Finn uploads the datastick into the holoprojector he flicks through them and smiles, the best one turning out to be of U’lxo reaching their tentacles out and poking all of them into laughter. He even manages to get a picture with Ferran, who looks sour about it, and one with Dr. Kalonia before she shoos him away.

He avoids spending time in their quarters. Poe’s books are still strewn about the place, his spare boots flung haphazardly near the door and his model fighters suspended in some strange little battle that he had gotten really into one night and hadn’t had time to finish before Finn dragged him to bed. When he’s in the room, he expects Poe to be there with him, filling it up with his sunshine and sweet scent. Now it just feels like all the air’s been sucked out, and Finn feels listless when he’s in there, moving slowly like he’s fighting his way through a thick fog that keeps reaching out to pull him under.
The room is cold and colourless, even when he puts on the holoprojector of the galaxy and watches it spin across the walls and floors and his skin, purple and blue and white. The bed is too big, and Finn finds himself sleeping dead in the centre with all the blankets scrunched up around him, clutching at Poe’s pillow despite the fact that it doesn’t smell like him anymore. The stress of worrying over Poe and the general feeling that a stormy raincloud is following him around at all times leads to his nightmares coming back and he jolts awake more than once a night, shivering, flinching away from the residual heat of Ren’s staticky lightsaber, spitting and hissing and getting ever closer to slicing right through his heart. He mumbles his worry about the dreams to Rey over their vidcalls, looking down at his hands rather than meeting her eyes, and her voice sounds tight when she reassures him that it’s all fine. It sounds like she’s lying.

He wakes at around daybreak every day, wastes time staring at the ceiling for about two hours or so until his shift at the medbay begins, sits by himself at lunch and listens to PEN-E whistle things to try and cheer him up. He finishes his shift, gets changed into one of Poe’s t-shirts that still smells like him and spends a few hours in the combat room, sparring with anyone who offers and practicing his shooting if anyone doesn’t, learning how the guns pull to the left just a little with the added weight of his ring and adjusting his grip accordingly. Then he heads down to engineering so PEN-E can chat with the other droids while Maeve tries to engage him in conversation about a bunch of technical mumbo jumbo he doesn’t understand. He and PEN-E steal into the kitchen pantry and lift some snacks, leaving a credit chip programmed with the right amount of money like he’s seen Poe do so many times before, and they make their way out to the little garden and watch the sun pass through the sky.

D’Qar is a strange planet made up of forest trees with thick waxy leaves and a heavy atmosphere. The little garden shouldn’t really be able to grow, but for whatever reason it still blooms, healthy and happy, swaying towards the sunlight. The sun itself is huge, a giant gas ball simmering quietly over the horizon, and they never really get a sunset because it’s so big that it’s impossible to lose sight of it. Usually a planet would have been eviscerated by a sun that size, but the sun itself is weak, almost brand new and fledgling, a low-mass star that can’t create nuclear fusion. The base collectively fondly refer to her as a straggler, because she limps through her slow rotations like the runt at the back of the pack.

The dirt he sits on under the tree is hard and unyielding, yet another reason why the plants shouldn’t be able to grow. The forests survive because their roots are tenacious, giant and strong, and they force their way through the ground to the massive hollow spaces that lie beneath the planet’s surface. The planet is riddled with them, like swiss cheese, and it would be the perfect place to hide the base if it weren’t for the massive reservoirs of water that fill up these hollow masses. They could drain the water, sure, but then they’d have a bunch of angry tree roots trying to impale them for taking away their resources, which the base collectively decided when it was founded that it wasn’t worth it. The forests provide good cover since the base isn’t that big anyway, and the trees allow them to dig down for water reserves, so it works out for everyone.

Finn had learned that the trees were at least passably sentient on the second day of Poe’s absence. Despite Poe being born on Yavin 4, a planet thick with jungle and plant life, he’s never taken Finn out to the garden, nor has Finn expressed any real interest in seeing the forests. He knows Rey loves all the green on the planet she’s on with Skywalker, and the miles and miles of ocean she tells him about are more than she could have ever imagined back on sandy Jakku, but Finn doesn’t really share the same pull towards nature that she does. Poe had looked after the weird plant thing Mr. Hoku had gifted them, and Finn now does his best to keep it up, watering its pot and taking it out to the garden so it can chill with its plant buddies.

When he’d gone to plant the other plants they’d been given as gifts, he’d taken in the hard soil and immediately decided he didn’t want to be digging through that with his bare hands, getting mud
under his fingernails that wouldn’t come out for days. So he’d wandered over to the treeline of the forest where the ground got squishier with all the water the roots suck up from the hollow earth miles underneath. He’d been scooping up the dirt with the flat of his palms to avoid getting his fingernails dirty when a branch came down and whacked him on the shoulder. He’d shaken it off, bemused, and went back to digging. Twenty minutes later saw him stumbling back into the base covered in head to toe in wet dirt and shivering in rage.

The General had sputtered to a stop when she saw him, blinked slowly, and gestured for him to follow her into her office, where she poured him a drink of amber coloured liquid.

“Pull up a chair,” she’d said while sitting down behind her desk. Finn had stood there, dripping dirt, not moving an inch. He didn’t want to get all her furniture dirty.

“Or not,” she’d muttered. “I see you’ve managed to get up to… Something, while Poe is gone.”

“Those trees are a menace.”

“Ah, I see. You’ve been in the garden,” she said in an amused tone.

Finn scowled. “I just wanted to plant some plants and be on my way but then this massive branch came down and nearly clobbered me to death.”

“They took offense to you digging up their earth,” she’d explained.

“They’re trees, Sir, I don’t think they’re capable of taking offense.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure about that?” she asked primly.

And that’s how Finn received a crash course in respecting sentient nature while covered in wet soil, gripping a glass of strange sour tasting liquid and dripping all over the General’s floor. She’d given him a small trowel and told him to just suck it up and dig into the hard dirt, and that the big tree with blue and green leaves would take care of the rest. Itching to scrub his skin clean, Finn had about turned and hightailed it out of there as fast as he could, and returned with a mop and hour later much to the General’s amusement.

Now, he stays far away from the treeline and chooses instead to sit under the bows of the silvery branches of the big tree, letting the blue and green leaves obscure his view of the base and the simmering sun just slightly, with a book he’d filched from Poe’s collection. Many of the boxes in their room had held manuals and books about planes, freighters, and engineering, and Finn hadn’t really been tempted to pick them up, but after some digging he’d found a collection of battered and weathered adventure books, probably from Poe’s youth. Some of them have the date written in wobbly hand on the inside of the covers or a sticker saying that it belongs to ‘Poe Dameron, Class 9: Mir. Helsher, 10 ABY’, and so on and so forth, the texts getting longer and more difficult as the ABY dates go up. Finn’s never had much experience of reading fiction novels about pirates and aliens and romance, swordfights and magic and imaginary worlds, so he carefully pages through the books, soaking up the words that Poe seems to have read over and over again, and feels just a little bit closer to his friend, sharing something like this.

On day four of the radio silence, Finn realises it’s what would have been Taungsday movie night with his friends. He misses them more painfully than ever, a sharp hurt in his chest that stabs at him when he forgoes sitting under the tree outside and decides instead to curl up on the squishy purple sofa with Poe’s book and PEN-E perched on his shoulder.

[Friend-Iolo?] she beeps at him and he shakes his head sadly. The last time they were in here she was
cradled in Iolo’s hands as he tried to shield her from having to see Finn and Poe lying across each other lazily, kissing and touching while their friends did their best to ignore them. Finn does his best to push that thought away, not ready to linger on the way it makes his chest ache.

Of course, once he knows it’s Taungsday again, he realises that Poe’s birthday is nearly upon them. He’d told Finn it was on the second Benduday of the fourth month, and Finn decides that with only seven days until then that he really should try to find a gift to give him. If folks gave them gifts to celebrate their wedding, fake as it was and continues to be, then surely they’d give gifts to celebrate someone’s birth, right? Finn wouldn’t know, but he guesses that even if that isn’t the custom, Poe would appreciate the gesture anyway.

He’s a wire of nerves on the fifth day, taught and jumpy, waiting to hear something, anything. Nothing comes.

He puts a lot of time in at the combat room that night, ending up with split knuckles and blood sprayed all over the mat. March actually looks a little concerned, which sits strangely on her usually completely passive and neutral face, so Finn guesses that he might seem a little wild right now. But there’s an energy under his skin that he just can’t shake, and he wants to keep chasing it down, because maybe when he reaches the end of it he’ll feel better, and Poe will call, and everything will be alright. It’s ridiculous, he knows, but he carries on anyway, until Howard and Enif come along and physically drag him out of the room. He slumps in their grip and lets them haul him towards the messhall in search of some sustenance.

He’s tense at the table they force him to sit down at, jumping when Enif slides over a tray of food that he has no interest in consuming. He’d received his first paycheck on the third day of Poe’s absence, and had thought about hitting the little black market to buy something new and curious, but the fun drained out of it when he realised Poe wouldn’t be there to share it with him.

The food tastes bland in his mouth as he methodically chews and swallows and Howard valiantly attempts to keep up cheery conversation for a full half hour until Enif hits him over the head.

“Can’t you see he doesn’t want to talk?” she hisses.

Howard huffs. “It’s not good to keep it all bottled up inside, though,” he insists. Howard has curly hair, like Poe, but his eyes are a startling shade of light blue that match the paint on his fingernails most days.

“We’re concerned about you, buddy, that’s all,” he continues and Finn flinches at being called buddy by anyone other than Poe, but he tries his best to smile anyway. His friends are just trying to look out for him as best as they can.

He pushes the bowl of grainy slop away from him and twists the ring around his finger, watching the way it catches and glints in the light.

“I don’t want him to get hurt,” he says finally, slowly, like it’s being dragged out of him.

Howard makes a soft noise in the back of his throat and reaches forward to hold Finn’s hand. It’s the first time he’s really touched someone else in a non-clinical sense since Poe left. Finn knows what his boundaries are with Poe, knows that he can hold his hand and touch his waist and his hair and Poe will smile and lean into it, but he doesn’t know if other people will react the same way if he reaches out for them. So he’s kept his hands to himself for the past few days, stiffly avoiding contact. Perhaps he’s been punishing himself in some weird way, because Howard’s gentle touch makes relief hurtle
through him like a dam breaking.

“You love him, and you miss him, and you’re justified to be worried,” Enif says, “But don’t forget that those five days were just a guideline, so I wouldn’t worry too much.”

“When’s it okay to start properly worrying?” he shoots back before he can stop himself. Enif looks shocked, but he continues, gritting his teeth. “Seven days? Or is that too soon? Nine days? Or how about a dozen, can I start panicking then?”

He stands up abruptly, the chair scraping on the floor and making a horribly aborted sound. Enif looks genuinely scared, which is strange since she’s had him up close and personal, trying to punch her square in the face, and hasn’t once flinched away. He takes a deep breath and rubs a hand across his face, feeling the cool metal of his ring on his skin. It’storturous to know it’s there, and to know that Poe was still wearing his when he left.

“Sorry,” he whispers, and sits back down again. The bowl of mashed up grain seems even less appealing now, but it’s warm, so he curls his hands around it anyway.

Howard swallows and looks at Enif, but she’s staring at Finn with a critical look in her eye.

“You must really love him,” she says finally.

Howard scoffs. “Of course he does, they’re married!”

Finn just nods slowly, his lips unwilling to let any words past. He won’t say it, won’t touch it with a ten foot pole. Not until Poe’s back.

He doesn’t know what kind of mood he’s projecting as he walks back to his quarters, but the people in the corridors move around him without saying anything, giving him a wide berth. Gloomy, he decides, as he looks at himself in the mirror in the bathroom. Watching the blood stained water swirl down the drain, he avoids looking at his reflection, instead drying his hands and applying some antibacterial salve. Tired, as well. His eyes feel dry and irritable, and his skin feels too tight for his body, but not in the good way he had felt after Poe had kissed him for the first time. This time it feels restricting, and he wants to scratch and scratch until he’s free.

He almost doesn’t vid Rey, but then he sees PEN-E perched on the desk, swivelling her head between Finn and the vidscreen mounted on the wall in anticipation, and finds that he can’t deny her this. She’s been his little companion while he’s been lost these past few days. He can’t imagine what it would have been like if she hadn’t been there, how alone he would have felt.

Rey’s face is anxious when she answers; she knows what day it is.

“Nothing yet,” he sighs and her face crumples.

“Oh, Finn,” she bites her lip, “Everything will be just fine, I’m sure.”

He nods slowly, taking in her face. She looks healthy, happy, like she’s glowing. Whatever she’s doing out there on that island with Skywalker is giving her something that Finn doesn’t think being here on the base with him ever could have. She would have been on edge here, surrounded by all these people she doesn’t know and doesn’t trust. She’d have probably left in the dead of night, stealing away in an old plane and returning to Jakku. He’s glad that never happened, that she has more purpose in life now than just waiting on that hellish planet for whoever it is to come back to her.

“Tell me a story,” he requests and she smiles softly, launching into one of her many experiences with
Skywalker, this one ending with R2-D2 spitting out incredibly creative curses until Luke sheepishly took out its expletive protocol.

He finds himself giggling as PEN-E whizzes across the desk, beeping at Rey to hear more about R2-D2, who, according to PEN-E, seems far more interesting than C-3PO. Rey indulges her, her nose scrunching up while PEN-E whistles in awe, her lens zoomed in on Rey’s face.

Finn eventually tells her about the garden outside, something softening in his chest and spilling out to warm his blood at the way Rey’s eyes go all happy when she hears about the life blooming out there. She snorts when Finn complains about the sentient trees showering him in muck and tells him that he has to be nicer next time.

“I’ve not been able to really explore much of these islands,” she explains. “There’s so much Luke wants to teach me, now that I’ve worn him down, I mean. But when we take a break we sometimes sit in the shade of the trees.” Finn smiles at the way her eyes have gone distant, remembering.

“They’re furry, and soft, and I like to reach out and touch the bark. It’s like nothing I’ve ever felt before. Did you know you can drink from the inside of a tree?”

Finn shakes his head quickly, not wanting to interrupt. “Luke had some special scoop thing that you dig into the bark until water trickles out. The oceans are too salty to drink from, and it takes ages to purify the water from the little lakes, so we mostly just drink from the trees. It tastes sweet,” she laughs.

“You have such a sweet tooth,” he shoots at her, grinning.

“You better save me some of those disc things,” she wags her finger at him.

“Biscuits,” hecorrects. “And you’ll actually have to come visit if you want any.”

Her face softens. “Soon,” she promises, and PEN-E beeps in excitement, her torch light flashing.

He feels better when he talks to her, basking in her friendship, but as soon as she signs off he’s on his own, alone in their room. He lies in bed, tense, staring straight ahead at the door like any second some ensign will knock and tell him there’s been contact, but they never do. His sleep is uneasy, full of vines that wrap around him and snow that falls ice cold on his skin, and always the spitting hiss of Ren’s lightsaber, crackling and hot, getting ever closer.

He’s a bit distraught on day six. It’s like everyone knows what he’s going through and people either shoot him pitying glances and pat him on the back or avoid him altogether. The General falls into the second category, and Finn doesn’t know what that means but it probably isn’t good.

He drops so many things in medbay that Ferran all but pushes him out of the doors, telling him to get his head screwed on straight or maybe sleep, since he looks like hell. Finn scowls as he passes a wall of graffiti on the walls of North corridor, cursing out Leo Pruppa and all his descendants in his head, but he doesn’t have the energy to scrub it off. He can’t find it within himself to care about anything other than Poe right now.

He’s terrible company to PEN-E, he knows, but he hopes she understands when he locks himself in his quarters and doesn’t come out all day, bundling himself up in blankets and sitting in the middle of the bed with Poe’s rock collection perched on his knees, trying to figure out a rhyme or reason to its organisation. There is none, he finds, but he runs his fingers over the smooth edges of the shiny rocks.
and stones anyway, thinking about how a younger Poe kept these rocks in his pockets so he could reach out and touch them, much the same way Rey does to her soft trees and Finn does to Poe’s hands.

He calls Rey for lack of anything better to do even though he knows she's probably super busy, but she picks up right away, takes one look at his miserable face, and launches straight into a story.

“How come you answered so quickly,” he asks when her voice trails off.

“I told Luke you were waiting on some news about Poe and he said it’s important to be there for your friends so he’s letting me take breaks to speak to you.”

Finn’s never met this Luke Skywalker outside of the “history” books they were given as part of their Stormtrooper training, but he decides right there that he likes him. Skywalker to him had been an opposer to the Force, someone who destroyed everything the Empire tried so hard to build, someone they were ordered to capture but not kill on sight. They told him that Skywalker had killed the people he’d promised to protect, most of them children, and then disappeared, and the First Order would stop at nothing to gain justice for those lives. Finn suspects now that it's all bullshit. He absentely wonders what else he thinks he knows of history was a lie, some part of his brain having a small existential crisis when it dawns on him that he honestly knows nothing, can trust nothing, other than what the General and Rey and Poe have taught him.

“You should have seen his face when I said Poe was your husband, though, he looked like he’d swallowed a whole lemon,” Rey giggles and brings him back to the present.

“A lemon?” he questions, unsure if what she's referring to.

“It’s a yellow fruit,” she explains, “And it's super sour and people pull funny faces when they eat one. It’s used as a little thing on the side of other things because a whole lemon would probably kill someone.”

“Food is weird,” he mutters and Rey nods slowly, her eyes wide.

“I’ve been living off rations all my life, so all this new stuff is crazy to me.” The inflatable bread things she hates, he realises. She must have been eating that all her life. When she visits he's going to use up all his paycheck on the little black market and buy tonnes of new foods for them to try until they’re sick of it all, holding their stomachs and groaning.

“Luke gave me a square of something called chocolate the other day and it was incredible,” she whispers in awe. PEN-E buzzes happily and spins her head around to look at Finn.

He laughs. “Yeah, we’ve had chocolate,” he says. “You’ve gotta eat it fast or it’ll melt in your fingers. Poor Penny here got sticky fingerprints all over her,” and PEN-E beeps the affirmative and spins in a little circle, showing off her clean body.

Rey makes appropriately awed noises at her before Finn hears beeping in the background and Rey turns to talk to someone, probably R2-D2. She turns back to him and sighs heavily.

“You’ve got to go,” he says and she nods, looking unhappy about it.

“Call me later, I’m sure it’ll all be fine,” she assures him and signs off, waving sadly.

His watch tells him it’s mid afternoon, and he stares at the little plant on the desk swaying happily, it’s poisonous bright yellow berries weighing down the leaves, until his watch tells him it’s mid evening. He doesn’t feel hungry but he goes to the messhall anyway because he knows Poe would
The noise in the messhall drops from pleasant chattering to a low buzz as soon as he steps inside and he wraps Poe’s jacket more firmly around himself, slipping his hand into the pocket to stroke over PEN-E’s head, trying to ignore people’s pitying stares. U’lxo waves one of their tentacles at him and he goes to sit at xir’s table with Howard who pushes a pot of that weird gloopy stuff Iolo likes so much in his direction. He eats the whole pot, even though he doesn’t like it, because he feels like Iolo would be affronted if he let it go to waste.

He stares at the ceiling for a long time that night, flinching in and out of sleep every time he starts to drop off, trying to stay awake as long as he can. PEN-E sits on her little pink cushion and buzzes in what he knows is an attempt to make him feel better. He smiles weakly at her but doesn’t move from his giant mound of blankets on the bed.

Rey calls and he lets it ring out the first time, unwilling to get up, but she persists and keeps on calling until he hauls himself over to the desk, with all the blankets wrapped firmly around him, pouting at her when the video comes through.

“Oh Finn,” she sighs, and proceeds to distract him by telling him story after story. Ones about lifting Chewbacca in the air using the Force and the decibel count of his resulting yelling, ones that Luke has told her about Han when she’d asked, all their adventures in the Falcon, and an especially funny one involving a daring escape from a trash compactor. He giggles at that and immediately feels bad about it; to be feeling anything other than worry for Poe right now seems wrong, but Rey looks so happy to see him laughing that he can’t help it.

“Call as soon as you know anything,” she says earnestly and Finn nods, promising.

“I didn’t know you cared that much about Poe.” She blinks at him and he realises how that probably sounded to her. “I mean,” he says quickly, “I’ve never seen you guys talk.”

“He calls me quite often,” she says, a furrow in her brow. “You didn’t know that?” Finn shakes his head slowly. Poe’s never mentioned it, and neither has Rey.

“When I left and you hadn’t woken up yet I used to insist on seeing you in the hospital. Poe would link me to a hand held vidscreen and bring it into the room with him when he visited. Sometimes he’d talk to you, in a language I couldn’t understand, and sometimes he’d do paperwork or read a book and I’d talk to you instead. After that, we just kept calling. He’s a pilot,” she shrugs, “I’m a pilot, and we both love you. He sent me a coat back with Chewie when he went to get supplies that one time, remember? It’s waterproof, and it has a hood. I’ve never had a coat before,” she says quietly. Finn doesn’t remember Chewie coming to visit, but then again he was passed out in medbay for a long time and then spent two weeks scrubbing every inch of the base he could reach and quite a few places he couldn’t with an intense fervour. If he’s managed to miss Rey and Poe becoming friends, it’s possible he’s missed a lot of other things aswell.

“I love you too,” he says simply, grinning at her. She giggles and blows him a kiss and he pretends to grab it from the air and smacks it against his cheek. PEN-E beeps indignantly until Rey blows her a kiss too and then spins her head around and around, whistling, when Finn presses the kiss to the top of her head.

She gets up and shows him the coat Poe sent her: it’s a soft powder blue made of shiny material, and when she puts it on it’s at least two sizes too big but she seems so happy to have it that she’s glowing. He wonders where the hell Poe found a jacket like that, and then wonders if it at some point belonged to Poe. Maybe he gives coats to everyone he likes, or even stumbles across. Knowing how large his collection of weird t-shirts is it wouldn’t surprise Finn to find out that there’s a broom
cupboard somewhere out there stuffed to the brim with clothes, just waiting to be gifted to any unsuspecting person who stumbles their way onto Poe’s path.

He stays talking to her for so long that he almost falls asleep on the desk, his head lolling and slipping only for him to jolt out of it at the last second. Rey laughs and bids him goodnight, and he’s left sitting in a pile of blankets on the beautiful wooden chair someone had given them as a wedding gift, trying to decide whether or not it’s worth it to try and get some sleep free of bad dreams. There’s nothing better to do than worry endlessly about Poe’s safety, so he drags himself back to their bed and squeezes his eyes shut as tight as he can, hoping that when he wakes up Poe will be back and everything will be okay again.

The fourteen hours of day seven he has to live through are hell.

He’s tired but jumpy, a strange combination of listless and agitated. His bones feel jittery, shaking like they’re trying to break free from his body. Ferran takes one look at him and shakes his head, and even when Finn protests, Dr. Kalonia herself comes and escorts him out. It’s just as well, he thinks, because his hands won’t stop shaking.

Howard accosts him in the corridor and drags him by the arm through the hangar bay doors and outside. Finn tries his best to ignore the big empty spots where the X-Wings usually sit and instead makes vague grumbling noises in Howard’s direction until his friend snorts out a laugh and grins at him.

“We’re gonna give this a bash today,” he announces when they stop in front of a rock wall, tall and sturdy. Finn squints at it and then at Howard.

“We’re going to bash down this wall? I’m all for anger management but that seems a bit-”

Howard rolls his eyes. “We’re gonna climb it, you idiot,” he interrupts. “You’ll be learning how to scramble and free climb today. Important jobs for a Pathfinder since, you know, we’re the ones who have to find the paths. Sometimes they’re blocked by walls like this and you’ve gotta use your hands.”

This is honestly something Finn’s never thought of before. Again, with the gloves of the Stormtrooper uniform he’s never had to use his hands too much other than pressing buttons and pulling triggers. He’s suddenly incredibly grateful for Howard and his adept intuition at knowing just when Finn needs to be distracted. Concentrating on learning this will be the perfect way to block his mind off from thinking about other things, resulting in being far more effective than staring at his bedroom walls for hours on end.

“You might wanna take off your jacket,” Howard says, nodding towards Poe’s jacket around Finn’s shoulders and Finn immediately scrambles to get it off, removing his ring as well. He doesn’t want either of them to get scuffed or damaged in any way.

Howard takes him through the basic steps of scrambling at a low height, and then they move up and up and up. Howard produces some rope and carabiners from Force knows where and teaches Finn how to make the right knots and where the clips go on his belt, and then the rock is biting into his hands as he tries to scale the face, Howard next to him and murmuring encouragement. It’s hard to know where to place his hands and feet, but it keeps his mind occupied, trying to find the right foot holds and grips that aren’t going to cut up his palms. He doesn’t get it right every time and he ends up with blood slicking down his skin and drying on his wrists but he keeps going, using his upper body strength to pull himself up until they’re at the top and Howard is clapping his hand on Finn’s...
“Do you wanna-?” he gestures vaguely to Finn’s hands. They’re covered in rusty blood that’s dried in the cracks and lines of his palms. The wounds are only shallow, and they sting a little, but he clenches his fists and breathes through the pain. Strangely, it focuses his mind. He shakes his head at Howard and watches his friend’s eyes narrow but he doesn’t say anything, just ushers Finn over to a taller wall with weeds growing through the stone and they work their way up that one too.

He’s halfway up scaling the third wall, Howard picking out a path for Finn to follow with his little handheld axes, when they hear the news.

“Sirs!” a red faced Ensign yells up at them, twisting his hands together. Finn nearly lets go of the wall when he realises they must have news, they must have heard something. He can feel his grip starting to go lax when Howard yelps his name and glares him into submission. The look sits wrong on Howard’s face, because he isn’t a serious person in the slightest, but Finn feels cowed all the same.

The twenty minutes it takes to slither back down all three walls safely are the longest of his life. He keeps thinking about Poe and what news they’ve heard, whether it’s bad or good, and accidentally missing foot and hand holds. Howard has to keep shouting his name to get him to pay attention. Finn feels miserably bad about it but his mind is running a constant stream of panic that it’s honestly hard to even see what’s directly in front of him, and he catches his hand suddenly on a sharp rock that rips his palm open, hot and painful.

They thud to the ground and Finn fumbles to get the ropes and carabiners off as quickly as possible, Howard leaving them in a pile at the bottom of the wall and snatching Finn’s jacket up to hand to him. Finn shrugs it on, the blood on his hands wiping off on the sleeves a little, and slips on his ring carefully, annoyed that it’s getting bloody but too distracted to really care. He’ll polish it later.

They follow the Ensign through the corridors in a quick jog, Finn’s heart beating hard and fast. His throat feels dry and he keeps trying to swallow through it. He can see Howard shooting him worried looks from the corner of his eye and valiantly ignores it. His mind keeps flitting between an endless stream of panic and a curious blankness, like the calm before a storm.

They round the corner into the main planning room and Finn can see it’s complete chaos, until everyone catches sight of him, and then they just… Stop. Finn’s heart breaks right there and then. Everyone’s throwing glances between him and the General and he must look pathetic, panting and bleeding all over the place, wrapped up in Poe’s jacket, because she looks at him solidly for a second before gesturing to follow her into her office.

“Mr. Dameron, every time you’re in here you’re dripping something or other,” she grumbles and gestures for him to sit. Finn cradles his hands in his lap to try and stop the blood from touching the General’s furniture, letting it spill onto the dark material of his trousers instead.

“Please,” he whispers, “What’s going on, Sir?”

The General stares at him for a moment, tight lipped. “We’ve received word from Captain Kun,” she says, keeping steady eye contact with him. “She reported that Commander Dameron went missing over thirty hours ago on route to Yag’Dhul. He went ahead by himself without informing the rest of his squad, because he’s apparently an idiot, and they then got held up in fire with a First Order cargo ship. So we found the shipments that were going missing, but it seems Commander Dameron found something else and didn’t tell anyone.”

Finn swallows. “Thirty hours?”
The General nods slowly. “They were unsure of his whereabouts on the planet, or why he even went there by himself in the first place. The original plan was to work along the trade route, starting with Javin and ending with Yag’Dhul. The squads have been trying to get into contact for some time now, unsuccessfully, because Commander Dameron went off course during the firefight with the First Order ship and stopped responding.”

Thirty hours is a long time to not respond, Finn thinks. “Captain Kun ordered a scouting of the planet and they’ve been skimming over the surfaces for signs since, until now, because I’ve ordered them back to base.”

“Sir-!” Finn jolts, because they can’t just give up, he refuses. He’ll steal a fighter and fly there himself if he has to.

The General holds up a hand to stop his outburst. He curls his hands into fists and concentrates on the sick bite of pain to stop himself from saying something untoward to her. “We’re regrouping,” she says in a soothing tone. “They’ve collected some information and we now know why Commander Dameron did what he did.”

Finn slumps in his seat. “What do you know about Yag’Dhul?” the General asks, her hands finding a datareader and pulling up something on the screen. Finn shrugs. He knows it’s along the Corellian Trade Spine and that it intersects with the Rimma Trade Route, but other than that he’s pulling a blank. The General nods and hands him the datareader.

“Yag’Dhul is a harsh planet, barren, lots of red sand and rocks. The natives are the Givin species—” Finn takes a second to pull a face. The Givin’s look like walking skeletons and never fail to freak everyone out, no matter how useful their mathematical genius is. The General nods her agreement and continues, “—But it seems that in the chaos of the destruction of the New Republic, the First Order has pounced on them. We had no reason to know, as we don’t have any alliances with the Givin, but Captain Kun reported spotting a base of operations at the bottom of a crevasse where it seems the First Order are holding the Givin people hostage and using them for their mathematical abilities.”

Finn nods slowly, understanding dawning. At least Poe went and got captured for a good reason, trying to free the people. He looks down at the datareader, readjusting his grip when it slips through the blood still leaking from the wound on his palm, and tries to make sense of what he’s seeing. It’s a map of the land on Yag’Dhul, the miles of hard red sand giving way to a giant hole in the ground like a canyon. At the bottom, he guesses, is where they’re hiding their hostage base.

“We don’t know why they’re holding these people, how many of them there are, or how heavily guarded it is,” she says. Finn nods. He understands now why she called them back. If they’re going to stage an attack then it’s best to be as prepared as possible, rather than a ragtag team of X-Wing pilots who have already been through one firefight today.

“Captain Kun says their trajectory has them arriving back to base in three hours, which gives us time to plan,” she looks him hard in the eye. “We’re going to need your expertise on this.” It’s not a request.

Finn nods quickly. “Anything,” he promises. She seems satisfied, her mouth quirking up at the corner a bit.

“Would you like some time…” she gestures vaguely, probably trying to be accommodating towards his distraught husband, but he can see her shoulders are tense. She wants to get going as quickly as possible. She’s probably known Poe a lot longer than Finn has, and on top of that she has to think about the safety of the Givin people, and the safety of everyone on base and everyone
she puts on this mission.

He crams his feelings into a tiny ball inside his chest and locks them up tight. “I’m good,” he says roughly. Her eyes narrow but he stands up and goes to hand the datareader back before realising it’s slick with his blood and apologises sheepishly.

She waves her hand. “Get cleaned up,” she orders, “Take Sergeant Dayjump with you and catch him up with what’s going on. I want you back in the planning room in ten, Corporal Dameron.”

He blinks in surprise. “Well, you’ve got to start somewhere,” she smiles and ushers him out of the door.

The trip to the medbay goes by in a daze, Howard hanging on his every word and taking it all in with hard eyes while one of the nurses sprays Finn’s hand with something. It stings, but he ignores it, just like he’s ignoring the churning of his stomach and the way his heart is beating too fast.

The folks in the planning room go quiet when he walks back in but his demeanour must be different now, harder, because they go back to the low buzz of activity almost straight away. The General gestures him over to the central table where a projection of the canyon on Yag’Dhul is pulled up, people gathered around debating how to go about infiltrating.

“Can we make it three dimensional?” he asks, and someone across the table nods, fingers flying, and the projection squares out until it’s vaguely see-through, the readings from Karé’s accompanying droid showing how far down the canyon goes and what’s filling up the space. Finn blinks. It looks like a forest down there.

“I thought you said this planet was harshly conditioned?” he mumbles to the General and she shoots him an unreadable look.

“Obviously they’ve done something to make it more habitable,” she flicks her fingers through the projection, moving it until it faces Finn directly. “What can you tell us about how the First Order would operate in this kind of base?”

Finn swallows and tries to ignore the eyes on him. The outline of the trees in the canyon are tall and spindly, a good hundred feet up, and it looks like there’s thick foliage on the ground too. There’s a vague horseshoe shape in the centre that looks like where they’d be holding the people. Finn’s mind slips into tactical planning, drilled into him from his time as a Stormtrooper, and he lets it, overwhelmingly grateful that he has this to concentrate on instead of the pain in his chest.

“You can dismiss anyone being stationed on the land at the lip of the canyon, they’d be too far away for anything useful and there’s no cover for them if anyone attacked. Stormtroopers may be expendable but they’re not that expendable, especially when they could be doing something more useful elsewhere.”

The General nods. “We can land our fighters there, on the lip. Put them in low power mode to mask the noise and approach from the corners instead of coming in from the top.” Someone behind her writes that down on their datapad and hands it off, the activity picking up speed behind them as they hammer out a plan.

“Your problem is going to be the foliage,” he continues. The General purses her lips. “Like Endor,” she murmurs.

“For whatever reason, this base is important. They’re intercepting trade regularly just outside of the planet’s scope, meaning they’ve almost always got a ship stationed up there to fight off anyone who
gets too curious. Building an ecosystem like that takes time and effort, so they’re in it for the long haul. We can assume, then, that the ground will have a lot of guards, and more now they’ve got Poe-,” his voice cracks. “Um, Commander Dameron, I mean. They’ll know we’re coming.”

Howard puts his hand on Finn’s shoulder and he tenses, his first instinct to shake it off, but he ends up leaning into it. He can pretend, just for a second, that it’s Poe’s hand.

“The shape of the base means there’s only two entrances,” he indicates the ends of the U-shape, “But if they’re serious about protecting the base then they’ll have guards in the surrounding treeline all around it.”

“What about in the trees?” Howard questions and Finn almost snorts.

“Stormtrooper armour doesn’t allow for that kind of dexterity. We don’t go through tree climbing classes,” he says slowly, before clearing his throat. “They, I mean, they don’t go through tree climbing classes. It’s safe to say there won’t be anyone up there.”

“But that doesn’t mean there won’t be anyone further out on speedsters,” the General points out.

“They’ll definitely have at least four fight teams in the surrounding deeper treeline equipped with vehicles of some sort, vibro weapons too, and there will probably be simple traps set up on the ground as well.”

“We’ll need several groups of Pathfinders then,” an Admiral Finn doesn’t know the name of pipes up. “Approach from all angles, including from the trees, distract and incapacitate until the squads can come in from above and add to the distraction, creating an opportunity for breaking and entering.”

The General nods her head once, satisfied. “I want groups Alpha, Darnell, and Itchata on the ground approaching from the North to East section, Cashile and Dovev in the trees, Haides and Rune in the South to West section, Yamanu at NorthWest and Keme at SouthEast.” She turns to Finn and scrutinises him carefully. Finn feels grabs the urge to straighten his shoulders under her gaze.

“I’m going to put you in Alpha,” she says finally, “The group that’s going to break in and infiltrate.”

“Are you sure…” he fumbles for the right words. The ball of emotions he’d crushed down in his chest threatens to spill over for a second. “He’s my husband,” he whispers, “I’m not sure if I can-”

“You have to have faith, Finn,” she says and reaches out to touch his jacket. He nods numbly. “I have faith in you.”

Finn almost crumples right there and then, the General’s bright brown eyes on him and looking so earnest. “What do you have faith in?” she asks.

“Poe,” he answers without thinking. “Rey, you, all of this, it’s all… So good. You’ve all been so good to me. He’s been so good to me.”

She tugs on his jacket, a smile ghosting at the corners of her mouth.

“That’s because you are a good person, Finn. I know that you can do this.”

“Yes, Sir,” he Chokes out and she pats him lightly on the shoulder and turns away to pay attention to a harried looking young Melodie woman.

Howard grabs his arm and leads him off to get equipment. There’s new boots and a pair of the strange stretchy trousers in brown with two gold stripes down the side, a dark olive coloured shirt,
and belts and holsters for his weapons. U’lxo slips him two knives when xe passes, winking wobbly, and Finn straps them to the inside of his boots. A short range vibrostunner goes in his thigh holster, and a blaster pistol on his hip, along with a collection of regular and magnetic grenades. Howard hands him a small pack and he fills it with climbing equipment and an emergency first aid kit. There’s a pouch that’s just the right size for PEN-E, and he looks around wildly for her for a second before remembering he left her powered down in his room this morning, not wanting to put her through another day of his moping.

“I’ll be right back,” he murmurs to Howard and takes the pack with him. It’s about an hour until the squads are due back and it’ll take at least another hour after that to scramble everyone together and nail down the full plan, so he has some time to call Rey and fill her in.

He knocks his knuckles on PEN-E’s head to wake her up and she whirs into life, spinning her head curiously up at him and his new clothes and bumping into his fingers.

“We’ve heard news about Poe,” he whispers and she whistles excitedly.

[Friend-Poe! Finally. Took his time] she beeps and he laughs. [Okay?]

“Oh quite,” he says sadly, and she warbles and buzzes under his palm. “I’m going to call Rey, I’ll explain to both of you.”

[Hero-Rey] she chirps and zooms over to the vidscreen, expectant and impatient. He huffs a small laugh and puts the command through to call Rey, wondering exactly what he’s going to say to her and whether he can look her in the eye without breaking down straight away.

“Finn,” she breathes, eyes wide when she answers.

“Hey,” his voice wobbles. He looks down at his hands rather than into her worried eyes. “They um. They found Poe. Sort of. He’s been captured, we think, along with a bunch of other natives on the planet Yag’Dhul. We’re setting up a search and rescue operation now, so it’s all a bit… Hectic.” He’s proud that his voice doesn’t crack at all, but it still sounds weak.

“Are you going with them?” Rey asks and PEN-E whistles something along the lines of [Damn straight, if they try and leave us behind we’ll hijack a plane and fly there ourselves] which makes Finn laugh.

“They’ve got me on Pathfinder duty, Alpha group. I know some people in the squad so I’ll be in safe hands.” He swallows thickly. “The General seems to think I can do it but, Rey, I don’t know -” he bites down on a sob.

Rey fidgets around like she wants to reach out and touch him. It sucks that they’re so far apart, that he can’t hold the hands of anyone he loves right now because they’re all so far away from him.

“You can do this Finn, you just have to keep your head straight. I hate to say it but you’ve been trained for stuff like this, you know you can do it.” She winces, her eyebrows drawing together. “You have to forget about Poe while you’re out there, focus your mind. I’m sorry.”

Finn almost chokes on the force of the emotions that try to push their way up his throat. Scrunching them up into a little ball in his chest is all well and good but when faced with his best friend telling him he’ll have to forget about Poe- Poe who gave him a name and a home and has taught him so many things, who gets crinkles around his eyes when he laughs, who touches Finn so gently and reverently with such warm eyes- He doesn’t know how he can keep it down. His eyes water and he swallows compulsively, trying to shove it all away, and Rey lets him, quietly observing with anxious
eyes. PEN-E whistles and bumps into his fingers and he rubs across the top of her head, grateful for the familiarity of her touch and presence.

“May the Force be with you, Finn,” she says finally and he spits out a mangled sounding laugh, sharp and bitter. Rey bites her lip, looking like she's struggling not to leap into the Falcon and fly all the way to him, just to give him a hug. She’d do it in a heartbeat, he knows, if he asked.

“You can do this,” she adds. “I’ll be thinking of you both.”

He stares blankly into space for a few minutes after she’s signed off, gazing at the little plant swaying cheerily on the desk, taking the time to make sure his feelings have been squashed down good and proper so they won’t spring up in expectantly at the worst moment. His head hurts and his heart thumps painfully against his ribs. He twists his ring around his finger carefully, watching it shine in the light.

Eventually he scoops up PEN-E and puts her in the front pocket of his pack, whispering that she has to be quiet and she beeps back at him the affirmative. He’s reminded that it’s not just Poe who’s been captured: in all likelihood BB-8 has too. He hopes fervently for a second that they haven’t damaged the droid. He’s almost out the door when he realises he’s still wearing his jacket and he stops to think for a second. He doesn’t want it to get ruined, but he also wants a piece of Poe with him to make himself feel better. He shrugs it off carefully, folding it over the wooden chair next to the desk and letting his palm rest on the soft fabric just for a moment. Then he walks over to Poe’s rock collection and selects the shiniest, smoothest rock and slips it into his pocket. This way, he can touch it and think of Poe. He can also quite effectively bash someone around the head with it if worst comes to worst.

Enif winks at him when he makes it back, clad in her matching Pathfinder outfit. “You’re in Alpha group with March and Howard,” she says, “They’ll look after you. I’m in Cashile up in the trees.” She twirls on the spot and Finn laughs. She’ll be perfect up there, light and willowy as she is, being able to hop from branch to branch easily. There’s not a drop of fear in her, and she definitely knows how to fight, so he has no qualms about her ability to come out of this alive and kicking.

“Remember to pull your gun a little to the right when you fire,” she reminds him and he salutes jauntily, remembering how she’d taught him how to accommodate for the weight of his ring just a few days ago.

How he kills the time remaining waiting for the squads to return he doesn’t know, but it passes somehow, and his head still hurts and his heart still aches but he feels steadier, more settled into his bones. He concentrates on what he has to do, pushes thoughts of Poe to the side, and runs through the plan over and over in his head.

There’s a big rush when the squads to arrive, and Finn realises that if he hadn’t been promoted and reassigned as a Pathfinder he would have been one of the medics on scene. Everyone sticks their heads out of the door to see the pilots in their flight suits rush past, and Finn catches Karé’s eye as she goes but she quickly looks away. They’ve lost three pilots and fighters in the firefight, people whose names sound familiar from his friend’s stories but that he doesn’t know personally. He feels bad for the surge of relief he feels once he knows that all his friends are alive, but he knows it’s better to feel that way for the loss of life of people he didn’t know than the blankness he felt as a Stormtrooper. He cared about his fight team, and about the innocent civilians, but he didn’t know anyone really outside of that. Other Stormtroopers were faceless masses to him, and he guesses that’s how it was supposed to be. An endless supply of expendable bodies, unfeeling, uncaring.

When the time comes he follows Howard’s lead and straps his pack to his body securely, trailing after him as they shuffle onto the freighter transport, them and the rest of the Pathfinder teams. Alpha
team sits together, Howard, March, and two other humanoids Finn doesn’t know. One with rusty orange skin introduces themselves as Marty, and the scaly Nikto man just grunts at him, blinking slowly through black eyes. Finn isn’t going to comment on what he’s doing here, as he honestly has no place to say considering he broke out of Stormtrooper conditioning. He lowers his eyes respectfully, and the Nikto goes back to looking over his blaster.

The hours it takes to jump from the Illeenium system over to Yag’Dhul seem to drag on endlessly. The X-Wing pilots went ahead first, presumably to launch a second round attack on the First Order cargo ship hovering just above the planet. Finn isn’t so clear on their plan but he has faith in the General. The long history they have of pulling off incredible stunts like blowing up the Death Star leads Finn to strongly believe that they can do this.

The freighter shudders and rattles ominously, and the folks crammed inside glance around unsurely every few seconds, but everyone is ultimately pretty calm and quiet. There’s about forty of them making up the Pathfinders and about two dozen X-Wings, black, blue, and red Rapier squads, plus another twenty or so folks waiting to dock onto the First Order cargo ship and hold it while they’re on the planet. That’s nothing on the opposing forces they’ll find on the base, he knows, but he has faith that they can do it. He has to believe that it’ll work out, keeps chanting it over and over in his head, because he doesn’t know what he’ll do if it doesn’t. He can’t lose Poe, can’t even think about it, let alone losing any of his friends.

It’s a bumpy ride but they get through. Finn hears the crackle through his comm piece that the X-Wings were successful and the freighter docks with the cargo ship and people start to peel out of their seats and jog out into the bay, blasters at the ready. The ship itself is quite small in order to blend into the other cargo ships traversing the Corellian Spine and the Rimma Route, but it must be packed to the gills with weapons in order to engage in a firefight with their X-Wings for so long. Once the people are off the freighter they start to fly out again, low power mode activated, to land on the planet’s surface next to the lip of the canyon.

The heat is abrasive and the hard red sand stretches on for miles, as far as the eye can see. It’s not like Jakku where there was mountains of sand piled up to create a dizzying landscape; instead it’s just flat red stretching out in every direction, not a single place to hide. Finn was right: there are no Stormtroopers stationed up here, and when he peers over the edge of the canyon he can see why. Howard lets out a low whistle behind him, gaping at how far down it goes.

“I can’t believe the trees are so tall,” he murmurs and Finn makes a noise of agreement, because if the canyon is so deep that they can’t even the see the bottom then the trees must be hundreds of feet tall, poking up as they are to about the middle of the way down.

“I don’t envy Enif in the slightest,” he says and hears Enif’s clear laughter coming from the left. She shoots him a thumbs up, strapping into her climbing gear, and that prompts Finn to shrug off his pack and do the same. He’s suddenly incredibly glad that Howard had decided to give him a crash course in just the nick of time. He’s not an expert, but the lesson is fresh in his mind so he thinks he’ll do okay.

The hard red sand splinters when they hammer in the pegs, packed together tightly as it is. It’s more like concrete made of dust, he thinks as they pack special fortifiers around the pegs to keep them in place. As deep as the canyon is, it’s not very wide, and he can see the other Pathfinders doing the same thing at different points around the lip, covering all directions. Groups Cashile and Dovev will be going down with the Alpha team as far as the tree tops and then hopping off, making their way through the forest that way instead of carrying on to the floor.

The Nikto man goes first, then Howard and Finn, followed by Marty and March. Enif and her group
Finn, follow on another rope to the left of them and the Dovev group to the right. They’re quiet as they
abseil, only the sounds of their boots hitting the hard walls to fill the time. Finn keeps his body
relaxed and focuses his breathing, watching as the trees get closer and closer the further they go
down. Enif blows him a kiss as she hops off, disappearing into the branches at the tops of the trees
with barely a rustle. The rest of Cashile and Dovev follow, leaving only Alpha group to scale to the
ground.

Finn’s boots thump on the floor when they finally reaching the bottom and he quickly unclips
himself to let Marty and March reach the ground too. The ground is made of the same hard red dust
and sand as on the surface, covered in greenery that’s fallen from the trees, and Finn furrows his
brows, wondering how, exactly, life even grows down here. The trees are thick though and their
roots spread out all over the ground, dark brown and as large as the ones back on D’Qar, threatening
to trip them up as they walk inwards, ever closer to the base. March has with her a handheld
datareader spitting out a stream of data, and they wordlessly follow her through the tangle of roots
and trees, pushing branches and the green needles that cling to them out of their faces. Finn pulls his
shirt sleeves as far as he can down his arms, covering his hands, because the needles scratch against
his skin and sting. The Nikto doesn’t have the same problem, reptilian as he is, and he volunteers go
first and push the branches out of the way for everybody.

The further they make their way in, the more confused Finn gets. They’ve not seen a single
Stormtrooper or any evidence of one, and his mind keeps on getting stuck on how they’re sustaining
life down here. He reaches out and places a hand on the bark of a tree as he passes but it feels normal
to him, the bark rough on his skin. It must be the heat, he thinks, sinking into him and driving him
crazy. He can feel sweat rolling down his temples and his spine and shifts uncomfortably.

His comm crackles, telling him the X-Wings are in position on the lip of the canyon, and March
reports that they’re less than a mile to the base and are yet to meet any opposing forces. The other
groups report the same, one after another, and Finn squints into the mass of trees surrounding them
and feels the overwhelming fear that something’s wrong here.

“You’ve seen any water?” he asks Howard as the hop over a set of particularly high roots.
Howard shoots him a funny look and gestures to Marty’s pack.

“There’s water bottles in there if you’re thirsty-”

“No, I mean,” Finn interrupts, looking shiftily around at the trees. “How are the trees getting water?
I’ve not seen a single drop. The ground is all this hard red stuff and I don’t think it rains much on this
planet, so how are they growing?”

Howard looks confused. “I hadn’t thought about it,” he says slowly. “Hey, Captain! Corporal
Dameron may be onto something,” he shouts and March comes and joins them where they’ve halted.

“What something,” she demands, and Finn explains. She hums and looks down at her datareader,
tapping the screen a few times, and then her eyebrows shoot up.

“You’re right, it doesn’t rain on this planet nearly enough to sustain life like this.”

“It’s flourishing,” Marty murmurs, rubbing her orange hand against the bark of the closest tree and
peering up into its branches.

“Who cares?” the Nikto man grumbles. March shoots him an unamused glance and he rolls his black
eyes, but wanders over to join the rest of the group.

Finn scrubs his palm through his hair. “I’ve got a bad feeling about this,” he mumbles.
He remembers what Rey said about there being water inside the trees, and gets an idea. He presses his palm against a random tree trunk, then his ear. He knocks on the wood like he does on PEN-E’s head to wake her up, and it sounds… Hollow. It’s also buzzing slightly, which is alarming. Are there creatures trapped in there? Poe had described bees and wasps to him, so Finn is hesitant to do what he’s about to, but he knows something weird is going on. Taking a deep breath, he slides one of U’lxo’s knives out of his boots and jams the knife into the bark, silently apologising to his friend for ruining the blade.

“What are you doing?” Marty yelps, but March throws her hand out to stop her from pulling Finn off and narrows her eyes.

“Explain, Corporal,” she commands and Finn swallows under her hard gaze.

“My friend told me about how you can drink from the inside of a tree, because it holds water. I figured we could give it a go, see if there’s water or not.”

“There’s got to be water,” Howard points out. “How’s it going to grow otherwise? Maybe they get the Stormtroopers to come out here and spray them all or something.”

March raises an eyebrow. “Look around,” she gestures widely. “There’s a lot of land to cover, there’s thousands of trees here and they’re all huge. They’re going to need a lot of water in order to grow. It would take too many men too much time to water them all. They’d have to be at it constantly, and we haven’t seen a single sign of any troopers since dropping to the ground. They’re keeping people on the base, which means there’s a water supply coming from somewhere, but that could easily be provided by the cargo ship up above. Go ahead, Corporal Dameron,” she says, nodding at Finn. “I want to see what’s inside that tree.”

Finn readjusts his grip on the hilt of the knife and digs in again, hearing the creak and groan of the bark as it splinters. It’s not the same as the scoop thing Rey had described but it does the job decently. He applies more force and a huge chunk of bark comes flying off, surprising him. He peers into the hole it’s left behind and feels his jaw drop.

“What is it?” asks Howard, his voice curious and eager.

Finn reaches out a finger slowly and touches a wire. “They’re not real,” he breathes. “They’re machinery, look.” He moves out of the way and lets March peer into the gap.

Inside the tree trunk is a tangle of wires and flashing lights, reaching down and disappearing into the roots and all the way up too, too high for Finn to see where it all ends. The trees don’t need any water because they’re not real trees. He can hardly believe it.

March blinks, sticks her head back into the hole, then blinks again. “Check the other trees,” she orders and they all flip out their knives and start digging into the bark of the other surrounding trees, coming up with the same results.

Howard yelps when he sees what’s inside, his mouth dropped open in a perfect O. Even the Nikto, with his absolute lack of facial expressions, manages to look at least a little surprised.

“I think it’s safe to assume that every tree is not, in fact, a real tree,” Finn says at last, all of the surrounding trunks spilling wires and blinking their tiny interior lights at them.

March flips her transmitter, presumably to send a message back to base about what they’ve found, and Finn all but lunges forward to stop her. She shoots him a sharp look and he holds eye contact, determined to stop her.
“Ask yourself why these trees are here, huh? The Givin are mathematical genius’ being held hostage by the First Order in a huge forest made out of droid trees. They had to have been made by the Givin on the commands of the First Order. Why?” he whispers, peering around at the group’s blank faces. “We wouldn’t have suspected a thing if it weren’t for the lack of water. They’ve built the perfect spying machine. What’s to say these trees aren’t rigged with listening devices and vidcams?” He gestures meaningfully to March’s transmitter and she carefully flips it closed.

“Alright,” she says finally. “So we can’t contact the teams,” she points to Finn’s belt where the magnetic grenades sit and raises an eyebrow at him. He fumbles to detach them as carefully as possible, trying not to make it too obvious, and catches Howard’s eye to make him do the same. Marty and the Nikto follow suit, all of them moving the grenades into their pockets as March continues to talk.

“We’ll find the other groups,” she’s saying, walking slowly over to a tree. Finn walks in the direction of another tree and they fan out, casually palming the grenades in their pockets and peering inside the holes they’d made in the bark. “Check in at meeting point D and hash out another plan,” and that’s nonsense, of course, because there is no meeting points and there’s no way they could find the other teams in time but whoever might be listening doesn’t know that.

“Alright?” she calls again, and they all nod, in position. “Let’s go,” and they all jam their grenades into the tree trunks, pressing the button on the top to detonate them and flinging themselves as far away as possible. The resulting explosion is the loudest thing Finn’s ever heard, and his hearing goes high pitched and fuzzy with how close to the blast he lands. Electricity cackles over the tangles of roots on the ground and he tries to avoid touching them with only minimal luck, yelping when electricity ripples up his commlink and shocks the inside of his ear. It hurts like a motherfucker, and Finn almost bites through his tongue, but it’s got nothing on the sizzle of Ren’s lightsaber so he sucks it up and breathes through it.

“Report!” March’s voice calls as Finn’s trying to blink through the haze of smoke and his own disorientation. He hears Marty trill a positive report back, the Nikto grunt something, and Howard coughing up a storm to his left. He yells that he’s alright, before rolling onto his stomach and crawling over to Howard’s vague outline near him.

“You okay?” he breathes and Howard nods, eyes watering, holding onto Finn as they haul themselves upright and dust themselves down. He’s limping as they head back to the circle of trees they just blew up, so Finn shrugs off his pack and takes out the first aid kit.

“I’m fine, seriously,” he insists and Finn glares at him until he shakes off his boots and socks to let Finn check his ankles.

“You should check on your droid,” Howard grins and Finn blinks in surprise. “I know you slipped them in your pack, I’m not stupid Finn. That thing goes everywhere with you.”

“Penny,” he whispers and fumbles for the flap at the front of his pack, reaching in and scooping her out. She beeps loudly and indignantly, cussing Finn out in horrendously colourful ways that she must have learned from the other droids down in engineering, and he laughs, his chest ballooning with relief. He’d forgotten all about her, and feels terrible about it, but she seems just fine, insisting that Finn put her down and trundling carefully around on the ground.

“Is anyone else injured?” he calls as he applies ice spray and wraps Howard’s ankle. Marty stumbles forward with a cut above her eyebrow, spilling purple blood everywhere and dripping down her face. He falls into medical mode, cleaning and patching her up, and she smiles her thanks at him, her pointy teeth showing.
“Do you think that did it?” Howard asks March who’s examining the blown out insides of the trees. She tugs on a wire and it falls down, spraying sparks onto the green needles covering the floor.

“All the lights are off,” she says, making her way around and inspecting each tree. “I don’t know how far the decibel reach is for the other trees, so we need to keep quiet just in case.” She flips the transmitter and starts to relay instructions. Finn realises she must have taken out her comm piece to protect it from the electricity because he can’t hear anything through his own.

“Do not respond,” she’s repeating urgently. “Experiments suggest that the trees are all implemented with listening and vidcam devices, at least on the ground.” That last part is meaningful, aimed at the Cashile and Dovev groups far above them in the high branches. “Radio silence suggested for remaining mission. Do not respond to this message unless you have incapacitated the trees beforehand.”

Finn almost laughs at how ridiculous that sounds. But, then again, he remembers the healthy respect and fear everyone on base has for the surrounding forests on D’Qar, so maybe it won’t sound so weird to them. He scoops up PEN-E when she rolls past and ignores her high pitched chirps, placing her safely back in his pack.

“Why didn’t the droids pick up on the machinery when they flew past the first time?” he whispers to Howard and feels his replying shrug.

“They must have seen trees and just thought they were trees. No need to be suspicious about a forest. We’ll have to rely on Cashile and Dovev to get the drop on them now, along with the X-Wings,” Howard murmurs. “The best we can do is continue with our guards up. If these things are rigged then they know we’re coming.” Finn nods grimly.

They push forward through the forest, closing in on the base, their blasters at the ready. They keep as quiet as they can, listening out hard for any sign of troopers, but there’s nothing but the sound of their own breathing and the shifting branches as they pick their path through. Finn does his best to keep his mind on task, focusing as hard as he can, but a tiny portion of his brain is seized in terror for Poe. If they’ve managed to create a whole forest out of nothing but wires, Force knows what they’re doing to him in there.

His heart almost stutters to a halt when he realises that Poe’s been captured before. They knew him then, knew of Poe Dameron: the best pilot in the Resistance, and they’ll know him now too. Over thirty hours Poe’s been gone, which is more than enough time to alert the higher forces that they’ve managed to recapture the man who escaped with FN-2187 not so long ago. He clenches his hands around the blaster, feeling his ring biting into his skin, and crushes that line of thought before it can really go anywhere.

It doesn’t take very long to cover the remaining distance to the base and March throws up her arm to get them all to halt before they hit the treeline. He can just about see through the mesh of trunks and twists of branches to the side of the U-shaped base. They came in from the East, so the entrances to the building aren’t on their side. Groups Darnell, Itchata, and Keme were originally planned to storm the front of the building, creating a diversion for Alpha group to sneak in from the side. He has no idea what they’re doing now, though.

He peers through the branches to the right and spots the eyes of one of the other Pathfinders and breathes a sigh of relief. They nod to him and he nods back, tapping March on the shoulder and yanking his head in the direction of the other group. March executes some complicated hand signals and they have a conversation that way until she turns to the rest of Alpha and nods. Everyone’s in position, it seems. Now they wait.
They don’t have to wait long, the X-Wing squads swooping through the sky and raining fire onto the ground around the base, careful not to blow the base itself up with all the civilians inside. There’s a loud clang from inside the building and dozens of Stormtroopers in their plastoid armour come streaming out, fully prepared and advancing on where they know the groups to be hidden in the trees.

“Fan out!” March calls and they split up, taking cover behind the trees and trying to pick off the swarms of ‘troopers. Finn lets himself fall into tactical battle mode, ruthlessly cutting down the advancing ‘troopers and defending his fellows. Howard comes in to stand by his six and together they shoot down the ‘troopers trying to take out March, Marty and the Nikto.

Cashile and Dovev units come crashing down from the tree tops, strapped in using their ropes and balancing in the branches, blasting every Stormtrooper they can. The ‘troopers obviously weren’t expecting this, the wires in the trees probably not reaching high enough to know they had people up there, and they fumble and flail under the continued bombardment of Cashile and Dovev, plus the X-Wings blowing things up and causing mayhem.

Distracted as they are by Cashile and Dovev, March seizes the opportunity to break into the base, and they all fall in line behind her, following her commands. She gestures for Finn to go first, perhaps under the impression that he’d know more about the base than the rest of them do, what with him being a Stormtrooper for the majority of his life. He panics for a second, before spotting a door nearly as soon as they step through into the base and rolling his eyes. He leads the group towards what must be the monitoring room and kicks the door in. No need to be subtle if the cameras are trained on them. He drops down on one knee and fires at the feet of the two Stormtroopers in the room, the rest of the group shielding themselves from the direct line of the open door and aiming for the head and chest. It’s no match against the five of them and the two Stormtroopers go down like bags of rocks. He and the Nikto drag them out of the way and dump them in the corridor, then he heads over to the switchboard and flicks the button to turn off the cameras facing the doors.

Everyone is gathered around the mounted vidscreens in the small room, taking in the layout of the base. “There,” Howard says and points to a square with about a hundred Givin crammed into one spot, a set of Stormtroopers guarding them.

“Sergeant Dayjump, take Lieutenants Vance and Marty with you and liberate the prisoners, please,” she says, polite as anything. Howard quirks a salute at her and Marty and the Nikto, whose name must be Vance, follow him, blasters poised.

“Now, we’re going to find your Commander Dameron,” she murmurs and they start scanning the vidscreens for signs of Poe. It isn’t easy, because the screens keep switching to different rooms, but they eventually spot a corridor with four Stormtroopers guarding one door.

“That’s got to be it,” he says, noting the corridor number down on a scrunched up map on the desk before the screen changes over again. “Come on, let’s go,” but March grabs his arms before he can make it out of the door.

“Corporal,” she says, raising a stern brow at him. “I know that’s your husband in there, but you have to go into this with a clear head, follow my lead, obey my orders, okay?”

He swallows, appropriately cowed. He’s just so close to seeing Poe again that he can almost taste it, and every nerve inside is straining towards him, like a million flowers seeking out the sun. He nods, though, and steps aside so she can lead the way. He bashes the switchboard before he leaves and watches with satisfaction all the vidscreens blink out.

They pick their way silently through the base, making their way to corridor 42. They immediately
shoot any Stormtrooper who crosses their path, but there aren’t that many of them. They must have shifted all their power to cover the units outside, thinking they wouldn’t make it into the base, and now that they’ve taken out what essentially passes for mission control in a base like this, they’re none the wiser to their presence.

They hear blaster fire and the stampede of feet coming from another part of the building and a few startled ‘troopers run into them on their way to investigate and they take them down, buying Howard, Marty, and Vance some extra time to get everyone out. Finn’s mind is counting up the corridor numbers as they pass, ten, twenty, thirty, until the hit forty and March raises her hand to halt him.

On the map, corridor 42 is a short dead end. Corridor 40 runs parallel to it and connects via corridor 41. They peek their heads around the corner and pull back immediately, spotting two sentry guards halfway down 41 where 42 branches off. March motions that they move back and Finn follows, stopping somewhere safe along corridor 40 and turning to face the Captain.

“Do you still have that droid?” she whispers urgently.

Finn blinks. “Penny?” and March nods. He shrugs his pack of silently and opens the flap to the pocket where PEN-E sits, shushing her quickly before she can beep anything and give them away. She flashes her light curiously and spins her head between Finn and March.

“We can use them as a distraction,” March continues. “She’s small enough to cause curiosity but not panic.” Finn’s hands tighten around PEN-E for a moment, irrationally scared for his little friend. She whistles as low as she can and Finn strokes a finger over her head.

They make their way back up the corridor and Finn puts PEN-E on the floor and nudges her with his toe. She swerves her head around to look at him for a long moment, before rolling around the corner and out of sight. March and Finn stand back, their blasters poised and their fingers on the triggers. PEN-E returns a moment later, a blur of tiny blue, with two Stormtroopers following, and March and Finn shoot once each, taking them down with perfect aim, and then rush forward to catch them before they fall and make a huge racket. Finn grunts under the weight but March doesn’t look like she’s sweating it at all, and they drag the bodies down the corridor as quickly and quietly as they can.

Finn knows from the cameras in the monitoring room that there are four guards still down corridor 42. They’ll probably have noticed the two guards stationed at 41 suddenly disappearing, and his finger tightens on the trigger as he and March make their way down the corridor on high alert. They stop just before the turn into corridor 42 and March counts down on her fingers. When she makes a fist with her hand, they both spring forward, March taking the right and Finn the left with their blasters drawn high. The four Stormtroopers immediately rush them and blaster fire bounces off the walls as they engage in a firefight.

March and Finn push forward, gaining ground, and Finn kicks out the feet of a Stormtrooper when they get close enough, sending their shot wide and making them collapse to the ground. He presses a boot to their chest and sinks a shot into the black of their stomach, watching them go limp, before a blast shoots close to his arm and singes his shirt. He hisses through his teeth at the pain and whirls around to find another Stormtrooper behind him, advancing and shooting furiously. He aims at their hands until they drop the gun and they launch themselves at him, full bodied. He applies what he’s learned from Enif in the combat room and dodges swiftly, spinning around and punching them in the back. They stumble but attack him again, around the waist, and he goes down, grappling for any kind of hold on the shiny plastoid armour.

“Dameron!” he hears March yell, “I need your blaster!”
“I’m kinda busy!” he shouts back, avoiding a white fist to the face at the last second.

“It’s right by your leg, just kick it over here!” her voice sounds strained and Finn heaves a huge mental sigh before hauling himself up and headbutting the helmet of the Stormtrooper as hard as he can, kicking out with his foot at the same time. Through the dizzying pain in his skull he hears the blaster skitter across the floor and March yell out her thanks, accompanied by more blaster fire.

The Stormtrooper on top of him is clutching their head and Finn, in his muddled state, thinks it’s a brilliant idea to utilise Poe’s rock that’s sitting in his pocket and knock them out for good. His hand fumbles around his trousers for a second before hitting his thigh holster, and suddenly electrocuting the fuck out of this guy with his vibrostunner seems like a much more appealing plan. He jams the stunner into the black of the Stormtrooper’s stomach and they jolt straight up like a puppet whose strings have been pulled before slumping forwards, out cold.

Finn heaves them off, groaning and stumbling upright, clutching his head. “You took your time,” March pants, standing over the bodies of the other two Stormtroopers. Finn huffs out a laugh as she throws him back his blaster gun, PEN-E whirling around the corner and bumping into Finn’s boots at full pelt now all the danger has passed. He lets her beep at him, muttering that he’s fine, no really, the wound on his arm is just superficial, and that, hey, maybe freeing Poe and making sure he’s okay is slightly more important right now. She whirrs menacingly at that and he thinks that if she had eyes she’d be glaring.

March approaches the keypad to the solid metal door that stands in the way between them and Poe. “I haven’t the first clue what the combination is,” he wheezes and she shrugs.

“We don’t really need to know,” she says simply, and opens fire on the keypad. Finn flinches away from the burst of mechanics and the shower of sparks, but the door slides open so he’s not going to complain.

“Finn, buddy!” Poe crows from where he’s lounging on the floor, cross legged and smiling.

“What the fuck,” he hears March mutter over the rush of relief and absolute disbelief in his ears.

“Poe,” he chokes out and launches himself at his friend, crawling into his lap and wrapping his arms as tight as he can around him. Poe’s arms come up around his waist, like they always do, and Finn nearly cries at the way he’s rubbing circles into his back.

“Hey, it’s okay, I’m okay, we’re just fine,” Poe’s repeating over and over, his breath warm on Finn’s neck. Finn breathes in his sweet scent and lets himself get lost in Poe’s words. His heart is beating so fast it’s a wonder it doesn’t just leap out of his chest.

He pulls back and cups Poe’s face in his hands, running his fingertips over every inch of his skin to make sure he’s okay. Poe’s eyes are warm and brown and he’s smiling so hard that they’re crinkling up at the corners. Finn lets his thumbs linger over them for a second, memorising Poe’s face, and Poe bites his lip.

“I hate to break this up,” comes March’s voice, jarring them out of their little bubble, “But we’ve gotta get going.” She taps the comm piece in her ear. “The freighter’s on the ground now to pick up everyone.”

Finn blinks at her blankly, sitting back in Poe’s lap. His comm had been fried in the forest after the explosion, but he takes her word for it. It’s hard to drag himself out of Poe’s embrace but he manages it, helping Poe up and keeping ahold of his hand. Now that he’s shaken himself out of his Poe-induced haze he can see BB-8 conversing with PEN-E in the corner, both of them beeping over each
other in their excitement. Another wave of relief sweeps over him and he can’t contain his grin, squeezing Poe’s hand happily.

“After you, Corporal Dameron, Commander Dameron,” March says and sweeps them out of the room, bringing up the rear with the droids. Finn has enough presence of mind to let go of Poe’s hand and readjust his grip on his blaster, straightening his spine while he wrangles half his brain into focusing on being the lookout.

“You’re a Corporal now?” Poe murmurs, his breath hot on the back of Finn’s neck. He can feel himself get hot and swallows tightly.

“You got captured, I got promoted, it’s been a busy day,” he shoots back and hears Poe chuckle. He can’t believe he’s okay, not a scratch on him, right there and smiling dopily at Finn. He wants to press his lips to Poe’s and lick into his mouth, slow and steady, but he clamps down on the urge and instead leads them all down the corridors they’d just passed through, stepping over bodies of white armour as they go, until they make it outside into the hot air.

They’re rounding up all the Givin natives onto the freighter, preparing to take them away to… He doesn’t really know, or care about this part of the plan. It’s over: they rescued the people and Poe and he’s just so utterly relieved that someone could probably come up and punch him in the face and he wouldn’t care.

Howard bounces up to him, grinning, and lets out a whoop when he sees Poe. “Nice to have you back, Commander,” he pumps Poe’s hand enthusiastically and Poe looks a little bewildered but beams back at him. Howard claps his hand on Finn’s shoulder. “It’s gonna take two trips to get all the Givin out and then us, so settle in for a bit. We have about half an hour to kill before we leave.”

Finn’s brain is immediately seized with the idea of just how much he could kiss Poe in that half an hour, but he manages to thank Howard and murmur an excuse to March before he grabs Poe’s hand and hauls him over to a secluded spot somewhere away from too many prying eyes.

“Well, hey, if you wanted to get me alone you could have just said,” Poe jokes and Finn whirls on him.

“I want to get you alone,” he grits out and Poe blinks in surprise.

“What do you mean?”

Finn breathes out heavily through his nose. He can do this, he thinks. Just stay calm.

“We didn’t manage to have this conversation before, for whatever reason,” and that’s a deliberately vague statement because he knows exactly why they didn’t get to talk about it. Poe went and kissed him and turned his brain into mush and now they’re having this conversation within hearing range of two dozen folks who think they’re married. “But it’s important that we have it now,” he continues.

He watches Poe’s brows furrow together adorably, but plows on. “This marriage thing,” he lifts the hand with his ring on, “Is not working out for me. It’s no good. I can’t do it.”

Poe’s face goes blank and he blinks once. “Okay then,” he says thickly and twists his own ring off his finger and hands it back to Finn. He’s tempted to drop to one knee like the man in the romantic movie they’d watched together so long ago, but he’s not quite so dramatic and cheesy that he thinks he could pull it off.

He slips off his ring too and slides them both into his pocket along with Poe’s smooth rock, hearing them jangle together. “Okay good,” he smiles and Poe’s shoulders slump.
“What happens now?” he asks, his voice low.

“Now I ask you if you want to be my cute boyfriend,” Finn says all in a rush, forcing himself to get through it. Poe’s head snaps up and his mouth drops open prettily, his eyes wide and gazing at Finn with naked hope.

“Your- You want-” he stutters and Finn grabs his hands, steps in close.

“I don’t want to pretend anymore,” he rubs his thumbs over the back of Poe’s hands. “I want to kiss you whenever I like and not have it be because we’re practicing or because people are watching. I want to not have to worry about whether you feel the same. I want-”

“You want me -”

“I want you, yes,” Finn nods vigorously. Poe’s staring at him in awe, frozen, almost, in his apparent shock. Finn shifts sheepishly.

“You sound surprised, why are you surprised?” he bites his lip.

Poe shakes his head, curls bouncing. “I’m just… Overwhelmed. You said you wanted to practice for other people and you’ve never, I mean. You just carried on touching and looking at me the same, I thought we were just friends.”

“Did it occur to you that maybe I’ve felt this way the whole time?”

“Have you?”

Finn ducks his head, feeling shy. “I don’t think I knew what it meant, in the beginning. Being around you is like,” he searches for the right words. “It’s like being out in the sun, when it’s warm on your skin and you just want to stay there forever. I didn’t know what that meant, but now I do.”

Poe swallows. “Can I kiss you?”

“Of course you can,” he mumbles and then Poe’s lips are on his, soft and perfect.

He lets go of Poe’s hands in order to run his fingers through his hair, running his nails along his scalp, and Poe moans into his mouth and slumps forward, his hands coming up to rest on Finn’s shoulders. Finn shuffles as close as he can until they’re practically plastered together. He can feel Poe’s heartbeat vibrating between them, hard and strong, and he lets his mind go fuzzy and sinks into this kiss.

It’s hot and wet and slow, Poe licking into his mouth and biting on the edges of his lips until Finn groans and tightens his hands in Poe’s hair. It’s like a chain reaction going off: they bounce off each other’s pleasure until they’re drowning in it. Poe’s hand slides around his waist and he goes up on his tiptoes slightly to get a better angle and Finn huffs a laugh. Poe snorts and pulls back to bury his head in Finn’s shoulder, turning so he can run his lips along Finn’s neck. Finn tips his head back and does his best to stay upright, feeling weak kneed at the way Poe’s lips feel soft and wet and his breath tickles across his skin. He latches onto the hinge of Finn’s jaw and sucks and Finn’s brain screeches to a halt before he hauls Poe back up to capture his mouth again, licking over his teeth the way Poe likes it just to hear him whimper.

They kiss maybe a dozen times, trading back and forth slowly, sinking into the rhythm they know from before. Finn loves the way he can feel Poe’s breath hitch when he sucks on his tongue, and he goes about methodically trying to pull Poe apart piece by piece.
They’re both a bit stunned by the time they pull apart, dazed and blinking in the light. Someone clears their throat from behind them and they both whirl around to face Howard, whose face is an honestly startling shade of red.

“We’re about ready to go,” he says awkwardly. “Your droids are waiting for you.” He gestures to follow him, quickly marching away, the back of his neck pink. Poe smiles at him, happy and genuine, and Finn takes his hand and follows Howard into the freighter.

They sit beside each other on the way back, both of Poe’s hands cradled between Finn’s in his lap. He’d prefer to be closer, but they have to stay decent for the dozens of people surrounding them. They’re all very politely giving them a wide berth, subtly averting their gazes, but he catches Enif winking at him out of the corner of his eye and feels a laugh bubble up in his chest.

He can hardly believe how this day has turned out. It’s been one rise and fall after the other and he feels wrung out, exhausted. He lets himself slump into Poe’s side and feels Poe untangle their hands and slide his fingers into Finn’s hair, massaging his temples. Finn breathes deep and slow and drops gratefully off into sleep.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

“The noises you’re making right now are obscene,” comes Poe’s voice from above him and Finn turns his head to watch Poe rub a towel vigorously through his damp hair, flinching when some of the wet spray lands on his back. “Your reunion with our bed is more enthusiastic than your one with me, should I be jealous?”

“Be thankful that I’m not making out with the pillow,” Finn mumbles, watching Poe with hooded eyes. Poe just chuckles and pulls a shirt on, crawling into bed to flop beside Finn with his skin still damp and warm.

Chapter Notes

i'm so sorry you had to wait two months for this, have lots of fluff and porn

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Finn wakes up with a bump and a clatter as his head jolts off Poe’s shoulder due to the seemingly rough landing of the freighter back on D’Qar. He blinks the sleep out of his eyes and numbly looks about, his brain not quite working yet, watching people shuffle tiredly out of their seats and off the craft. Poe rubs his arm softly and Finn turns to him, like a flower to the sun, like he just can’t help it. Poe.

His hair is a bit of a mess, curls limp and tangled from where Finn’s messed it up, and oh, he’d forgotten that even happened. It all comes rushing back to him now, the floodgates in his mind knocked permanently off their hinges and left creaking in the wake of the emotions that rise up within him, strong and heavy and light all at once, making his heart beat harder for no discernible reason. But Poe’s smiling at him, soft and gentle, and Finn wants to look at him all day.

“Come on,” he murmurs, standing up and pulling Finn up with him. Finn clings onto his hand, and he realises that there’s a weight missing. The solid gold band of his wedding ring is gone, he remembers, and he frantically scrambles through his pockets to find them. His fingers close around the smooth metal and his shoulders relax, relieved beyond belief.

The rings are a bit banged up, he notes, from where they’ve been pressed against Poe’s rock in his pocket, and his own ring is still smeared in blood from where he’d cut his hand open on the rock face this morning. This morning. It seems like a lifetime ago to Finn. He feels as if he’s aged a thousand years in a few short hours. It’s the same sort of feeling he’d had after he and Poe had kissed that first night, like he’d fundamentally changed and no one else had noticed. He gazes at the back of Poe’s head, the damp curls at the nape of his neck, and wonders if Poe will notice.

He’s still so tired, knackered down to his bones, and all he really wants to do is hunker down under a mountain of blankets with Poe and sleep for an undetermined amount of time, so everything blurs around him for a while. Poe keeps ahold of his hand, firm and reassuring, guiding him where he
needs to go. Luckily, March is the one who has to give a report for the Alpha team, being the Captain and all, so Finn gets to close his eyes and sway on his feet while Poe supports him around the waist, only half paying attention.

General Organa takes one look at him and Poe, purses her lips, and waves them off.

“I don’t want to be responsible for making one or both of you pass out,” she sighs.

Finn protests. “Sir, I’m capable of making a report,” but Poe pinches his side and he yelps, glares, but softens when Poe shoots him a significant look.

“Rest and recuperation, as ordered,” he grins cheerily, and the General looks about two seconds away from rolling her eyes at him, exasperated.

“I expect to see you in no less than a full twenty four hours,” she says sternly and then turns her back on them, dismissing them brusquely and addressing someone who looks slightly less dead on their feet than they do.

“Lots we can get up to in twenty four hours,” Poe whispers, and Finn snorts, chuckling quietly.

People nod at them as they walk past, weary but looking happy around the eyes, telling them how nice it is to have Poe back and Poe grins at each and every one of them, his hand still warm in Finn’s. Finn just wants to get back to their room, to let BB-8 and PEN-E power down and crawl into their bed with Poe and hold him as tight as he can. All these people are slowing him down and he has half a mind to sweep Poe off his feet and carry him at a run to their room, but that would be incredibly rude so he holds down the urge, impatiently squeezing Poe’s hand every time someone attempts to stop them until Poe winces and laughs, winks at the Ensign and makes their excuses.

“Someone’s in a hurry,” he whispers.

“Excuse me,” Finn replies with half a mind to sound affronted. “You were gone for six days and fourteen hours exactly, and you were captured for a third of that time. I think I’m allowed to be a bit impatient when it comes to getting you alone.”

Poe’s face softens, his eyes so full of fondness that it makes Finn’s cheeks heat up. “You could have just said.”

“I didn’t want to presume,” Finn mumbles, embarrassed.

“Presume all you like,” Poe insists, squeezing Finn’s hand. “Like, seriously, go ahead, any time of day, make a presumption and run with it.” Finn laughs, tired but genuine, and Poe tugs on his hand to speed them up on their way to their quarters.

More people try to make them stop and have a conversation but Poe powers through, all but dragging Finn behind him, their droids following at their own pace. It’s such a familiar scenario, something they’ve done a hundred times before, that it makes Finn’s heart ache in a lovely way, sweet and strong. His bones feel heavy but his heart is light, so full of the bright sunny feelings that Poe invokes in him. He hopes that they get to repeat this mundane thing over and over again, walking down the hallways of the base hand in hand, safe and happy, every day for the rest of their lives. Finn feels ridiculous thinking it because, realistically, they won’t do this every single day, but. He can’t help but linger on the thought and how elated he feels, filled up like a balloon and about to float away from pure joy.

Finn slumps against the door as Poe punches in the passcode, BB-8 and PEN-E beeping at each other in some odd conversation that Finn’s far too tired to follow right now. His eyes drift shut and
he lets his body relax, sliding down the wall just a little, and Poe’s arm wraps around his waist and supports him. He grins into Poe’s shoulder, breathing in his smell, which is a bit overwhelming after five days stuck in an X-Wing and another day and a half being held prisoner. Or quasi-prisoner anyway, as Poe honestly didn’t seem ruffled at all when Finn and March had entered where he was being held captive, not a scratch on him. Finn furrows his brow and mulls over the thought, letting go of Poe and scooping up PEN-E to carry her into the room. She spins around in his palm, vibrating gently, and it’s another familiar sensation that makes him smile, carefully stroking a finger over her buzzing head.

He gently places her on her little pink cushion, but she rolls straight off and stops in front of the vidscreen, swivelling her head around to stare intensely at Finn.

[Hero-Rey] she beeps at him insistently. [Poe is safe, call Hero-Rey] and honestly he can’t argue with that and Force knows he wants to talk to Rey, wants to see her sweet face and watch her smile. He can imagine it now, how the dimple in her cheek will pop and her nose will crinkle up, but he knows imagining it isn’t going to be anywhere near as good as the real thing so he pulls up the video and calls her.

Poe hums behind him, sliding his arms around Finn’s waist and pressing his forehead into Finn’s shoulder. He’s warm and solid, and Finn’s hands come up and cradle Poe’s without him having to even think about it.

Poe’s breath is warm on his neck when he moves his head and rests his chin on Finn’s shoulder. “You should take a shower,” Finn whispers and Poe snorts softly.

“You sayin’ I smell?” and Finn pinches Poe’s fingers, feeling his chest vibrate against his back as he chuckles. “You could always join me,” he continues, laying his palms flat against Finn’s stomach, rubbing gently. Something in Finn’s belly swoops dangerously at that thought.

“I’m gonna call Rey, let her know you’re okay,” he murmurs lowly, not wanting to break the moment by being too loud, and in his nervousness he pushes away from Poe, settling down in the chair that was gifted to them in celebration of their marriage. Fake marriage, whatever. It reminds him suddenly that Poe’s birthday is only a few days away and he still hasn’t managed to scrape together even an idea for a present, his mind too addled by worry to focus properly. That’s something he can discuss with Rey, he thinks, while Poe is safely ensconced in the shower and unlikely to overhear.

Poe hums again, reaching out and stroking over the back off Finn’s neck before pulling his shirt over his head and walking in the direction of the bathroom. Finn watches him as he goes, his eyes lingering on his back, and it’s only the sound of Rey’s voice calling his name that forces his mind back to more pressing topics.

“I’ve been saying your name for the past two minutes,” she exclaims and he smiles sheepishly.

“I was a bit… Distracted,” he attempts to explain and she presses her lips together but her shoulders shake, betraying her amusement at his expense.

“I see that Poe is back,” she says instead of commenting on his hot cheeks, sparing him some embarrassment.

“Safe and sound,” he quips, grinning at her. Her nose crinkles with joy and she proceeds to insist that he tell her the whole story, leaving no detail spared. He may or may not go a bit overboard, caught up in his storytelling, making explosion sounds with his mouth and gesturing wildly all over the place, but Rey’s eyes are wide and sparkling and she seems hooked, gasping in all the right places.
“I’m so proud of you, Finn,” she says in a breathy voice once he’s finished. His skin feels tingly and ducks his head, watching PEN-E spin around on the surface of the desk rather than look at her face. “No, I’m serious. Finn, you were amazing. You’re so loyal and true, and you have such a head for planning, you’ll have to teach me to be less impulsive.”

“I thought Luke was teaching you that,” he responds mulishly.

She grins. “What the old man doesn’t know won’t hurt him.”

Finn nods shallowly, his heart feeling heavy for some reason. “But those things,” he stammers, “Those things you said, they’re all things I got taught as a Stormtrooper. I can’t help but think it’s bad, that it’s wrong, to use what they taught me.”

Rey is shaking her head vehemently before he’s even finished with the sentence. “No, Finn, you’re taking those things and you’re using them for good. You’re fighting back, using what they taught you against them. They wanted to make a good Stormtrooper, someone obedient and unquestioning, and instead they made you. And you’re incredible.

“But it all comes from an evil place,” he can’t help but continue. “Doesn’t that mean that every time I use those skills-”

“Don’t be thick, Finn, it doesn’t suit you.” She purses her lips and breathes for a long moment through her nose. Finn watches with wide eyes, almost scared that she’ll reach through the screen and clobber him over the head with her stick to get her point across.

“I apologise,” she says finally, with forced calm. “I apparently need to work on controlling my temper.” Finn snorts at that and she grins.

“But seriously, stop being so self-deprecating. You did a good thing, and you’ll continue to do good things. I learned to fight in order to survive, to protect what little I had. I probably ended up hurting a lot of people, and that’s not a good thing. But now I’m using those skills to help people and it doesn’t make me a bad person for taking what I already know and using it in a positive way, does it?”

Her eyes are beseeching and Finn feels himself crumble. “I guess not.”

Rey nods decisively. “Now you’ve stopped being such a dummy, what else is going on with you? Specifically, you and Poe?” she waggles her eyebrows suggestively. Finn can’t help but groan and thump his head onto the desk, whining into the wood.

“We had a talk and I explained how I didn’t want to fake it anymore, how I wanted to actually date him, and we kissed and it was amazing and now he’s in the shower and I’m officially freaking out,” he lifts his head and searches her face for answers. “What do I do now?”

“Well,” she says slowly, “I don’t really know,” and he groans and thumps his forehead into the desk again. PEN-E beeps curiously but Finn ignores her, too wrapped up in his own anguish to respond.

“I’m sorry!” Rey cries, obviously fighting down hysterical laughter. “I’ve never done this before, I don’t have any experience in this area!”

“Neither do I,” he hisses, glaring at her which just causes her to bite her lip to stop the giggles from erupting.

“We could ask Luke-”

“No,” Finn all but shouts, casting a hasty glance to the bathroom door just in case Poe heard his
outburst. But the door remains closed and the faint sounds of running water can still be heard so he thinks he’s safe.

“Well who else can you ask?” and Finn knows Rey’s just being reasonable and realistic but he suddenly realises how completely unprepared he is for this, how he’s utterly on his own.

It’s not like he can just swan out and grab the nearest person and ask them how to go about having a relationship with Poe Dameron, best pilot in the galaxy, because, and here a list forms in his head, ridiculous and unhelpful: A) everyone thinks they’re already in a relationship, and B) Poe’s due to emerge out of the bathroom any second now. The sound of running water cuts out and Finn takes it as a signal of his own impending doom.

“Looks like you’re just gonna have to talk to Poe,” Rey shrugs and signs off before he can say anything.

“You are the worst friend ever,” he whispers furiously into thin air. PEN-E beeps in protest and Finn hastily strokes over her head. “I was lying, it isn’t true, Rey’s the best friend in the world.”

PEN-E stares at him for a moment before rolling straight across his hand to get to her cushion. Finn winces because PEN-E is the absolute opposite of light and now his hand aches. He flexes his fingers but he can’t really be mad at her. She’d done so well on their mission and Finn feels so proud of her, regardless of the cold fear that had gripped at his heart when she’d been sent off on her own.

He sighs and rubs his eyes, his tiredness crashing down onto him so suddenly that he sags under the weight. He gets up and strips off his pants, taking care to put their rings somewhere safe and return Poe’s rock to its home in his collection. He wiggles his toes and removes his socks, slightly damp from where he’d sweated throughout the day, and he wrinkles his nose as he throws them into the dirty pile of clothes near the door. He pads over to the chest of drawers and chooses a new pair of socks, smiling gently as he brushes his fingertips over the crude stitches that make up Poe’s name sewed into the side. Yet another small thing that he finds so lovely in its familiarity, the sensation of rubbing across Poe’s name in the dark when he couldn’t get to sleep and taking comfort in his thoughts of his friend.

Now, though, he tugs on a shirt and flops onto the bed, face first, groaning at how good it feels to be flat on a horizontal surface, arching his back and burying his face into the pillow.

“The noises you’re making right now are obscene,” comes Poe’s voice from above him and Finn turns his head to watch Poe rub a towel vigorously through his damp hair, flinching when some of the wet spray lands on his back.

“Your reunion with our bed is more enthusiastic than your one with me, should I be jealous?”

“Be thankful that I’m not making out with the pillow,” Finn mumbles, watching Poe with hooded eyes. Poe just chuckles and pulls a shirt on, crawling into bed to flop beside Finn with his skin still damp and warm.

Finn rolls over and gazes at him, drinking in every detail of his face. He’s gotten hollowly used to sleeping in this bed without Poe in the last few days: sleeping badly, but sleeping none the less. He wants to capture this moment forever, and suddenly remembers that he can, now, and scrambles off the bed in his enthusiasm.

“Where are you going?” Poe asks, propping himself up on one elbow.

“No, no, stay right there,” Finn says and whirls around with the camera, lifting it to his eye and
clicking a photo of Poe halfway to sitting, looking slightly alarmed and confused. His eyes soften, though, when he understands, and he relaxes back into the mattress and smiles lazily, his eyes crinkling gently. Finn can’t stop himself from snapping another photo, capturing forever the hazy pinkness in Poe’s cheeks from the warm shower, the way his wet hair curls around his ears and the back of his neck. The light from the bathroom, still on, casts shadows across Poe’s skin and Finn gently reaches out and rubs his thumb over Poe’s cheekbone, the camera limp in his hands.

He puts the camera down and slides back under the covers, closer to Poe now, leeching off his body heat a little. It feels indescribably good to be here with him like they were before, except now… Now he doesn’t have to feel bad for reaching out and touching Poe’s skin and for wanting to kiss his smile. He can just do it. He’s hesitant though, still, and Poe must pick up on it because he shuffles closer and places a hand on Finn’s cheek.

“You okay, buddy?” he asks, his voice soft and hushed.

“I think we’re a little past that at this point,” Finn blurts out before he can stop himself but Poe just chuckles.

“I can use other terms of endearment. How about sweetheart? Darling? Baby?”

Finn scrunches up his nose and wiggles his whole body because he feels so silly, so young and naive next to Poe, who seems to know everything. He didn’t even know you could call people these words, these terms of endearment as Poe had put it. He’s embarrassed and his skin feels hot and he closes his eyes tight so he doesn’t have to look Poe in the eye.

Poe doesn’t say anything for a while, chooses instead to rest his forehead against Finn’s and tangle himself into Finn’s body even more. Their knees and ankles knock against each other, bruising, but Finn doesn’t mind because he’s so comfortable, right here, close to Poe.

“Do you wanna talk?” says Poe finally after a few minutes have passed of them breathing deep and slow.

“How come,” Finn licks his lips. “How come you weren’t hurt more when we came to rescue you? Not that I want you to get hurt,” he hastens to assure and Poe huffs out a laugh, “But I’m just curious.”

Poe shrugs awkwardly. “I’m not so sure, to be honest. There wasn’t anyone particularly high ranking there, just one of those ‘troopers with the red things on their shoulders, you know the ones?’” Finn nods. Imperial shock ‘troopers, of high class. They must have been left in charge to run the operation in lieu of another officer. The forest itself seemed functional, nothing seemed incomplete or in progress, so the attending officer must have felt it acceptable to hand over command to the highest ranking ‘trooper.

“They had plenty of time to alert someone though, you were there for over thirty hours.”

“That’s what’s weird,” Poe muses. “Maybe they wanted to test out the tree things you mentioned? I’m honestly not sure. Maybe one Resistance pilot and a bunch of Givin weren’t enough to start a proper fire fight over.”

“I was worried,” Finn murmurs. “When we were walking through the forest I kept thinking about how they knew you, they knew you already from before we met and they know you even better now after we escaped. I kept thinking they’d do horrible things to you and Beebee-Ate, that I wouldn’t get to you in time, that-”
Poe shushes him firmly. “We’re made of tough stuff, me and Beebee-Ate. We knew you were coming.” Finn swallows down the ball of fear that sits in his throat and blinks back the wetness in his eyes.

“It was alright this time because I knew there’d be a rescue mission,” he reassures and Finn nods numbly before properly processing the sentence.

“Wait, what do you mean this time? Has there been times before when you didn’t know anyone was coming?”

“Well,” Poe drawls, looking uncomfortable. “It’s part of it, when you sign up for the Resistance. You know that they’re not gonna launch an entire rescue operation for just one person, no matter how great a pilot he happens to be,” he grins but Finn isn’t finding this funny.

“You mean that time, when we met, you didn’t think anyone was coming? You thought you were going to die there?”

Poe nods slowly. “It was a very high possibility, yes. And I’d accepted that, I accepted that right at the beginning when the General sat me down and explained things. I understand the risks of what I do and I get that I’m not important enough to risk other people’s lives over.”

“You are important enough,” Finn says fiercely. “You’re important enough to me. Me and Penny would have stolen an X-Wing and busted you out ourselves, even if the General had ordered us not to.”

“I don’t want you to risk your life over me like that though,” Poe says, his eyes sad. “I want you to be safe.”

“I want you to be safe too!” Finn exclaims. “But for you to be fully safe means keeping you grounded indefinitely and probably wrapping you up in cotton wool, which seems excessive. This is your job, and you’re going to go out there and fly your spaceship and thwart bad guys, and it’s my job to infiltrate and rescue people, and it’s risky but I’m good at it and I chose to do it,” he says, remembering his conversation with Rey earlier. “You can’t say that you don’t want me to do it because that’s like me saying I don’t want you to fly anymore, which I would never do.”

Poe looks at him for a long moment before breaking out into the sunniest smile and stroking his fingers across Finn’s cheek, making his heart thump hard in his chest.

“You are so lovely, you know that?” he says through his smile and Finn ducks his head, mortified. “No I mean it, my love, you’re so wonderful,” he insists and Finn melts a little.

“I like that one,” Finn says and Poe’s eyes soften and the smile slides off his face. “You are,” he whispers. “My love.”

Finn takes a deep breath and tries to calm down the unsteady and rapid beat of his heart against his ribs. Poe’s hand slides a little across his face to cradle the back of his head and he shuffles so close that he can feel Poe’s breath fanning across his lips. His hands twist themselves into Poe’s shirt, clutching at the material in a desperate attempt to ground himself somehow.

“How?” Poe asks and Finn leans forward and kisses him.

Poe sucks in a breath like he’s surprised which Finn thinks is a bit dumb. He lets a smile curl at the corners of his mouth as he pulls away before he presses back in again, firmer this time, their mouths a
little bit open. Poe’s mouth is hot and wet and he sucks on Finn’s top lip, causing Finn to groan deep and low. He’s missed this, this intimacy, and it feels even better now he knows they’re both on the same page.

He licks into Poe’s mouth, a little messy and wet but he’s beyond caring at this point. He flicks his tongue over the back of Poe’s teeth just to hear him whimper, and Poe goes slack in his hold. He takes the opportunity to touch Poe more, to spread himself out over him and feel that new closeness, and pushes him onto his back, settling himself on top of Poe by straddling his thigh. His weight is fully on Poe now, pressing their chests together tightly, and Poe lets out a breathy noise so pretty that Finn just has to chase the noise with his mouth.

Everything narrows down to the feel of Poe’s tongue brushing against his own, the soft little whimpers he makes every time Finn flicks his tongue over his teeth, how wet and hot everything is. Poe groans lowly when Finn presses his teeth into his bottom lip, slow because he really wants Poe to feel it, and he can’t help the immediate twitch in his hips against Poe’s thigh, pushing his hardening cock forward into the friction.

It’s not like Finn’s not been hard before, not gotten off before, but this is different. This is with someone else, with Poe specifically, and as much as he feels safe whenever he tries something new with Poe, the realisation that he’s getting hard, that he’s rubbing his cock against Poe’s thigh, actually scares him a little. He’s never done this before, not with someone else, and he doesn’t want to freak out and ruin what up to this point was a pretty great moment.

His lips have gone slack against Poe’s, his mind seized with the bliss that accompanies grinding his dick against Poe’s thigh, and Poe is actually pushing his thigh up against Finn’s crotch, like he’s trying to encourage the movement.

Finn sucks in a sharp breath through his teeth, hissing as his dick twitches and thickens some more. He gently, hesitantly, grinds his hips down against Poe’s thigh and Poe moans like he’s the one getting off on this. Finn grins against his mouth and bites him on his bottom lip before burying his face in the crook of Poe’s neck, pressing his lips against the skin and sucking. He tastes clean from the shower he’d had and Finn licks to see if he can find the taste of Poe underneath.

“Has anyone ever told you that your lips are amazing?” Poe breathes as Finn sucks a mark into his neck, a pretty pink colour following his lips, and he groans when Finn bites softly at his throat and grinds his hips harder.

He’s aware, absently, that Poe’s not getting any friction like this, so he returns to Poe’s mouth, licking sloppily into the wet heat of him, and pushes his thigh up between Poe’s legs at the same time. The broken whimper that Poe makes sounds like it was ripped from him and he throws his head back against the pillow, eyes scrunches up. Finn can see the veins in his neck straining and he licks his lips, drinking in the sight of Poe like this. Poe’s hands scramble against his back, rucking up his shirt, as Finn continues to rub his thigh against Poe’s dick, his own hips twitching down and grinding. His mind is stuck on the feel of Poe’s cock through his soft sleep pants, thin material not hiding anything at all. He squeezes his eyes shut and pants at the feel of him, the hardness of his length like nothing Finn’s ever felt before, and his brain feels fuzzy with the overwhelming realisation that this is Poe and that’s Poe’s cock and he’s getting Poe off.

Heat travels up his back and he shivers, Poe’s hands following the path of his spine and rubbing against the scar there, and fuck, that’s got to be a ridiculously sensitive spot because he can’t help the hard jerk of his hips, shoving himself into Poe’s thigh roughly. Poe’s fingers still on his back and then drag more firmly against the scar tissue, his eyes half lidded and hot as they focus on Finn’s face. He bites his lip and groans quietly, his skin tingling.
“Fuck, Finn, fuck,” Poe whimpers, “Come here, kiss me, please kiss me, please, I need it, I need-” and Finn swallows the rest of his words with his mouth, dragging his tongue thickly against Poe’s and savouring the moan it produces.

His skin feels hot and tight and jittery, their hips moving out of sync with each other, and Finn grunts in frustration, his cock throbbing in his pants but he’s getting no relief. He’s actually a little scared to continue, doesn’t really know what he’s doing or what this means. He’s safe, he knows, and both he and Poe obviously want this and are enjoying this, but there’s still a small bubble of panic in his chest and the more he thinks about it the worse it feels. Poe’s hands stroke across his cheeks like he can feel Finn’s frustration and confusion and Finn breathes heavily through his nose and pulls back.

“Are you okay?” Poe asks, his voice hoarse but concerned.

Finn extracts himself entirely and flops on his back next to Poe, both of them panting heavily. Poe’s hand creeps across the mattress and grabs onto his firmly. Finn laces their fingers together and squeezes, aiming for a reassuring gesture.

“I’m,” he flaps his spare hand around and makes a strangled noise which makes Poe snort and giggle.

“We’re good, we really don’t have to, it’s good.”

“I liked it,” Finn says shyly, and Poe grins at him and licks his lips, leaning over suddenly and smacking a wet kiss against his cheek.

“I liked it too,” and his voice is deep and low and Finn feels his belly flip over, making him want to squirm against the bed sheets and expel the rush of energy he’s feeling. He’s still hard, as is Poe, the lines of their dicks bulging against the front of their pants but they’re both politely ignoring it, averting their eyes like if they don’t talk about it it’ll just go away.

Finn feels strung out though, close but not close enough, and he knows how good it feels to come, those few moments of intense pleasure that rushes over him and makes his cock pulse, and he wonders what that would feel like with someone else there, with Poe.

He bites his lip, skin feeling inexplicably hot, and turns over so he can’t to look at Poe anymore, not even out of the corner of his eye, but he drags Poe’s arm over him and settles his palm against his stomach, wiggling until Poe gets the picture and plasters himself against Finn’s back. He’s used to holding Poe, loosely but still holding him, not wanting to put too much into it in case his chest cracked open with the force of his aching heart and spilled all over the man in his arms, but now he knows down to the very centre of his being that he and Poe are on the same page and his heart thumps pleasantly instead of in pain against his ribs.

Poe snuffles into the back of his neck, breath warm and tickling Finn’s skin. He purposefully keeps his hips a little away from pressing fully against Finn which Finn is honestly thankful for because he doesn’t think he could handle that right now. Just thinking about it makes his stomach twist in a funny way and he rolls his shoulders and forces himself to relax into Poe’s embrace instead of freak out too much.

“I missed you,” he murmurs, feeling the weight of his tiredness crush down on his eyelids finally.

“I’m here,” Poe replies sleepily. “My love.”

Finn smiles, genuine and sweet, tightening his grip on Poe’s hand, and lets himself fall into sleep.
The day off that General Organa gives him seems to stretch on forever, the hours he spends wrapped up in bed with Poe blurring together. He’s left a mark the size of a baby Bantha on the side of Poe’s neck and he gets flustered whenever he catches sight of it but it makes him feel strangely proud, and he finds himself reaching out to stroke his fingers across it before he can really think. Poe always laughs and his eyes crinkle up at the corners with delight and Finn is helpless to do anything but smile back.

It’s like the more time he spends with Poe, like this, the more he feels like he’s being restored: revitalised, renewed, refreshed. Those long days when Poe was gone drained him so completely, hacked into his core and stole away chunks of his being. He walked around like someone half dead, and he’d felt it, with Poe gone. It’s inaccurate to say that Poe feels like his other half, because he knows in his heart that he belongs to many people. A huge part of him is devoted to Rey, his beautiful fierce Rey, whose force of both nature and Jedi power continues to knock him off his feet and leave him breathless. Part of him belongs to PEN-E, his constant companion, the tiny friend whose loyalty makes him feel full to his very fingertips, a friend he never expected to make and is so glad that he feels him deserving of her friendship. All his friends too, March and Howard and Enif, even U’lxo and Ferran. General Organa, of course, who’s brought so many great things into his life and who he respects with absolute allegiance. It’s something that she earned, not that was drilled into him with the expectation that he’d obey blindly and that makes all the difference to him.

The list of people he knows that he’d formed in his head what feels like so long ago has grown exponentially. And heading it all up is Poe, his wonderful and bright Poe, who crowds his heart with his sunshine and love, his absolute faith in Finn and his sincere affection. Every touch makes Finn feel like he’s coming alive under Poe’s hands, makes his heart drum against his ribs in a rhythm that only belongs to Poe. Everything Poe, always Poe, and Finn has no doubt in his mind that one of the biggest chunks of him belongs solely to Poe.

It’s as if someone had taken his soul, long ago, and shattered it into pieces and then handed the fragments to the people who they’ll eventually belong to. Every scrap, every shred, all parcelled up and delivered unknowingly to those who would touch his life, just waiting for him to meet them. Poe had been carrying a piece of him unintentionally all this time, just waiting for Finn to smash into him so he could slot right into the place carved out for him in Finn’s soul. He wonders if he has a place in Poe’s soul, if he was carrying a piece of Poe around with him, biding his time until he could give himself over to Poe.

He thinks, maybe not. Maybe he didn’t carry any pieces of anyone’s soul with him, and that’s why he became a Stormtrooper; no, that’s why he was chosen. His heart hurts and squirms around in his chest when he thinks that, until a voice that sounds suspiciously like Rey tells him to knock it off. He had this inside him all the time, that’s how he broke free, that’s how he became. He was strong enough, he fought, he clawed his way out of that white and black uniform, stripping himself of its stifling expectations and turning into someone new, someone who was waiting for him just below the surface all this time, begging to get free. That has to be why he’d felt so much for Slip, surely? Why he couldn’t leave him behind, why he cared so much about those civilians, why he just couldn’t pull the trigger. He was already Finn, he just needed to be dragged to the surface.

It feels to him like Poe enhances everything, enhances him, to his very core and radiates outwards. Everything that he is just feels so much heightened around Poe, like he’s a flower blooming under the love and attention that’s showered onto him. Poe is like the sun, shining so brightly and providing him with energy to grow. Rey is like the rain, gentle and replenishing, helping him breathe. PEN-E
is, if he continues this ridiculous metaphor, the soil that keeps him grounded, calm and warm.

He feels incredibly content, now, with Poe’s head on his chest, PEN-E and BB-8 powered down in the corner, Rey safe and only a call away. The only thing that could possibly make this better is if Rey were actually here, but Finn doesn’t dwell on it. She needs time to finish her training, grow into someone even more amazing than she currently is, if that’s possible, which Finn doesn’t think it is. He’s happy to wait and see, though, to watch her change and listen to her achievements and glow with pride for her.

Poe’s asleep now, his head on Finn’s chest and snuffling quietly, making all the tiny sleep sounds that Finn has gotten so used to. Finn’s got his fingers in Poe’s hair, gently carding through the soft curls, and he’s satisfied enough to stay here, chest to chest with Poe, for potentially the rest of his life.

They haven’t gone any farther than before, shirts off and soft grinding, because Finn’s been feeling laughably conflicted, half his brain saying go for it and the other half telling him to hold off. He doesn’t know what the problem is, but he recognises that it’s the same nervous feeling he got before he and Poe kissed again in his room that night. He was so full of anxiety that he was almost shaking with it, but he knew beyond a doubt that he wanted nothing more than to kiss Poe. It’s the same feeling now, too, and in his heart he knows he’s being dumb but he can’t help the way his mind goes around in circles. What if he does it wrong, what if Poe laughs at him? He knows he won’t, that Poe would love him and support him no matter what, exactly like he did when they kissed. That worked out well, so well, so why would it be different now?

Maybe it’s because this feels more mature. Kissing is one thing but getting off together, touching Poe like that, touching anyone like that seems like a huge step to him, like there’s this massive gulf of inexperience between him and where he wants to be. He wants to be confident, to be sure of himself, to easily give in to the rush of want that Poe inspires in him and just go with it, but his constant intrusive anxiety is holding him back. How come he can be brave in some things, like escaping in a stolen TIE-fighter with a stolen Resistance fighter or charging into a Stormtrooper base filled with people who want to kill him, but he can’t be brave with this?

Poe twitches in his sleep, his hand curling open and closed over and over on Finn’s stomach and Finn takes that as an invitation to hold it, smiling softly as he does so. Poe’s brow furrows and then smooths out and he relaxes, and Finn goes back to playing with his hair, admiring the slope of Poe’s nose and the pretty pink colour of his lips. He’ll figure this out, he knows he will, and Poe will be there to hold his hand through it like he always does.

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Finn’s somewhat unsure of what a Pathfinder is supposed to do when they’re not finding paths, so after his report with the General he finds himself wandering back to medbay. He wonders if this is something he could do indefinitely: strike a balance between working in the medbay and being put to work as a Pathfinder. He’d be happy with that, he knows, because he finally feels like he’s got a place, that he belongs, that he’s found a groove where he fits and it feels undeniably good to finally be good enough, to be accepted.

Ferran puts him to work almost immediately after a brief half hug thing that Finn thinks must have been very hard for Ferran to make himself do because the man is stiff as a board when Finn pats his back. Either that or Ferran still doesn’t like him, after all this time. Finn snorts. There’s no way to please everybody. He guesses that he’ll just have to live with it.
Poe’s report takes far longer than Finn’s and he comes limping into medbay with the silliest pout on his face and instantly drapes himself all over Finn’s back, clinging on. Finn smiles, small and secret, and presses his fingers into Poe’s, massaging his knuckles and chuckling when he feels Poe’s groan vibrate against his back. He lingers over the ring on Poe’s left hand, rubbing it gently and thinking back to earlier that morning.

Poe had woken him up by kissing his neck and Finn had jolted so hard that Poe’s tongue damn well nearly ended up in his ear. Poe almost fell off the bed laughing, giggling so hard his entire body shook while Finn made embarrassed noises and poked at Poe’s ribs to get him to flinch. His skin has been warm and sleep soft, so brown and lovely, and Finn had wanted to stay there forever but they both had a report to make and BB-8 was beeping loudly from the corner of the room so Poe had smacked a wet kiss to the tip of Finn’s nose and hopped out of bed, shivering dramatically at the cold air and even colder floor beneath his bare toes.

Finn’s feet, however, were comfortably warm in Poe’s stolen socks and he wiggled them happily as he stretched out on the bed, groaning in satisfaction as some joints in his spine popped and cracked into place properly. He ambled over to the desk and stroked the leaves of the little plant thing that he’d grown oddly attached to during Poe’s absence and knocked on PEN-E’s head to wake her up, listening to her whirr and sputter like a disgruntled senior citizen waking up after a nap, grumpy and disoriented. He chatted to her a little bit, forcing himself out of sleep to concentrate on translating her binary into something he could understand, and his eyes fell on the rings he’d left on the desk the day they’d arrived back home.

They were still a bit banged up, and his ring was still covered in blood, dried and dark red against the gold metal, and he traced his fingers over them reverently, listening to them clink together in a sweet sound. He licked his finger and attempted to rub off the blood on his ring and he was still polishing it against his shirt when Poe walked back out of the bathroom.

“Oh,” he’d said, stopping short and blinking dumbly at Finn’s hands holding the rings.

“Yeah, we should probably talk about what we want to do about this,” Finn replied, peering at Poe anxiously from under his lashes. He remembers feeling uneasy, as if the impending conversation could lead to the crash and burn of the tentatively happy relationship they’d been developing over the last day or so.

Poe sat heavily on the bed next to Finn like he’s been magnetised to the mattress, still staring at the rings. He reached out and touched the tip of his finger to them gently and then yanked his hand back and pressed it under his thigh like he needed to physically stop himself from doing something. Finn frowned.

“I liked wearing them,” Poe said finally and Finn’s heart unclenched from where it was seized up in his chest like a big tangle of yarn, impossible to unknot with anything but Poe’s reassuring words.

“So did I,” he’d been quick to respond, pulling Poe’s hand out from under his thigh and dropping the rings into his palm. Poe cupped them carefully, smoothing a thumb across the tiny scratches where they’d bumped together in Finn’s pocket.

“But we’re not… We’re starting from the beginning,” Finn continued hesitantly.

“Yes we are,” Poe grinned, clasping Finn’s hand in his, the rings warm between their palms.

“But everyone still thinks-”

“Therein lies the problem,” Poe mumbled. He sighed, pouting, and Finn couldn’t help but feel an
intense fondness rush over him.

“I don’t know how we’d break it to… How everyone would react.” Poe had looked scared, his brow furrowed and his lovely brown eyes troubled. Finn irrationally wanted to smooth out that crease, to shield Poe from anything that could make him look like that in the future, to always keep Poe happy and safe.

Poe was right though. The entire base was still under the impression that they were happily married, which is honestly a huge step up from what they actually were: properly together but absolutely not at a point where they could, or even should, marry. Finn’s hands were shaking just thinking about it.

“I wouldn’t be, I mean, it wouldn’t be so bad to just continue letting them think that we’re still, you know, and just do our own thing in our own time,” Finn suggested sincerely, his heart in his throat. “I’m gonna hold your hand all the time anyway, kiss you anyway,” he grinned, “Nothing’s really changed, right? And we can make these rings mean something else. To everyone else they’d mean one thing but we’d have our own special meaning.”

He was grinning now, giddy with the idea of getting to keep on wearing these rings, happily wiggling on the bed and looking eagerly at Poe. Poe laughed and tipped his head back, biting his lip and gazing softly at Finn.

“How would we make them special?” he asked, obviously indulging Finn.

“We could engrave them? Or- oh!” he’d gasped, turning his bright eyes to Poe quickly to share his brand new, cannot be beaten idea. “We could get another and send it to Rey and they could be like friendship kind of special, just for us. We, of course, are more than friends, obviously, but,” he added hastily to the end of his sentence. “That would be so nice.”

Poe was quiet next to him, rubbing his thumb over Finn’s knuckles and breathing slowly. “You’d like that?” he asked and Finn had nodded vehemently.

“Only if you’d like it too,” Finn mumbled after a moment. He hoped ardently that Poe would like it, that they could have this special thing and share it with Rey, and then the two most important people in his life would be united. They’d carry a piece of each other with them always, like he’d thought they did before in their souls, but something real and tangible and solid, so no one could deny it.

“Of course,” Poe had breathed. “I would like- I would love that.”

“And Rey? With Rey too?”

“Yes,” Poe answered quickly, nodding his head. Finn’s heart had been beating so hard in his chest it felt like he was going to burst open with his happiness.

He squeezed Poe’s hand, feeling the hard press of their rings between them and savoured the complete elation blooming within him.

He turns around now and gathers Poe into him, cradling his head in the crook of his neck, ignoring the way the other nurses and doctors coo at them.

“You’re coming to lunch with us today right?” Poe mumbles into his skin.

Finn hums in affirmative response, carding a hand through Poe’s curls. Poe melts a little further into him, obviously drained after his time reporting with the General. Finn’s glad that he can provide comfort for Poe the same way that Poe does effortlessly for him, so easily, like he’s been doing this all his life.
He presses a kiss to Poe’s hair. “Are the rest of our friends going to be there?”

Poe nods sloppily into his neck. “We’re having a little celebration, a sort of coming home party. You can invite your friends too, we’ll push the tables together, it’ll be fun.”

Finn continues to run his hand through Poe’s hair, his fingertips buzzing with delight at the thought of all his friends being together. *If only Rey were here…* his mind whispers and he pushes it away. She’s doing something important, something more than all this, and he doesn’t really have a right to wish she were here but he can’t help but *miss her*, effervescently, but he can wait.

“I need to go down to engineering and see if Maeve can make us another ring.” PEN-E beeps loudly from inside his pocket and he laughs, Poe pulling away from him at last.

“Looks like someone wants to catch up with her friends too,” he grins, reaching into Finn’s pocket and cradling PEN-E in his palm, stroking her head. She buzzes happily, whistling his name, and Finn beams.

He presses a kiss to Poe’s cheek, warm and lingering, and starts to push Poe backwards towards the doors, returning PEN-E to his pocket. Poe groans dramatically and drags his feet all the way.

“I wanna stay here with you,” he whines.

“You’ll get in my way, I’m busy and important,” Finn teases.

Poe pouts. “I’m small, you won’t even know I’m here, I promise.”

Finn immediately feels his cheeks heat up, his mind rushing straight towards every reason why he could never forget that Poe is in the room. “You’ll distract me,” he whispers, bashful.

When Poe grins it’s all teeth and Finn has to suppress a shiver. “Well we can’t have that can we,” he whispers and grabs Finn by the front of his shirt, hauling him in to kiss him soundly, immediately opening his mouth and turning it wet and dirty.

Someone wolf whistles behind them and Finn abruptly jerks away, sucking a sharp breath between his teeth.

“Don’t make promises you can’t keep,” he hisses and Poe smirks.

“Well we can’t have that can we?”

Finn’s knees suddenly feel weak. Poe leans in and presses a lingering kiss to the corner of his mouth and then spins on his heel, waving goodbye to the medbay as a whole. There’s a chorus of *goodbye, Mr. Dameron*’s that follow him from all the nurses that are still giggling behind their hands at them and Finn’s feels his face turn even redder.

“Alright, alright, back to work everybody, show’s over,” he announces pointedly, hurrying to the store cupboard for no reason other than to escape everyone’s stares.

“It’s nice to know you two are still going as strong as ever,” Dr. Kalonia whispers to him as he dashes past and winks at him and Finn wants to sink into the ground in his embarrassment.

So that’s that then. He and Poe are obviously headed in the same direction, he thinks, remembering Poe’s smirk and feeling hot all over. He just needs to find the guts to actually *act* on it. But he knows Poe will leave it up to him, knows that Poe’s aware of his inexperience and is also beyond a shadow of a doubt the nicest and most thoughtful person on the planet and will make sure that *Finn* is the one
to make a move, so that he feels in control and that he sets the pace, whatever that pace may be. He feels a bit like screaming in frustration though because he just wants it over and done with, to come out the other side and be like, *I did this thing! Well done me! I aced it!* He doesn’t want the worry and the confusion and the *waiting*; at this point he just wishes Poe would snap and shove him against a wall somewhere and get it over with.

No. He breathes through his nose and concentrates on the vial of penicillin he’s holding, for whatever reason he doesn’t know, returning it to the shelf hastily. He wants this to be done right, not some short tryst against a grimy wall where anyone could walk in on them. He ignores the twitch his dick makes at the thought of Poe grinding their hips together, Finn trapped between the hard wall and Poe’s body.

He gets back to work.

By the time lunch rolls around he’s wound up and jumpy, every inch of his skin feeling sensitive and over heated. If it weren’t for the way Ferran glares at him every time he looks towards the door he would have escaped ages ago, to take a walk, water some plants, climb one of the walls outside, literally anything to take his mind off Poe.

It doesn’t help that Poe pulls Finn instantly into his side as soon as he sits down, wrapping his arm tight around Finn’s waist and keeping it there all lunch. The event itself is a huge mess of all of Finn’s Pathfinder friends colliding with his Pilot ones so no one really notices how on edge he feels, tapping his fingers on the table and jiggling his knee under it. Poe notices of course, but pointedly doesn’t address it, merely strokes his fingers over Finn’s side in such a slow way that it makes him shiver.

When his mind clears enough to be able to stop thinking exclusively about Poe and Poe’s fingers and Poe’s body and the noises Poe makes when Finn bites at his neck he’s pleasantly surprised at how well all his friends seem to be getting along. He has to admit that he was feeling a little anxious about his two worlds colliding, so to speak, but Jess and Enif and chattering away like old friends while Howard, Snap, and U’lxo gesture hugely around each other, U’lxo’s tentacles almost smacking everyone in the face more than once. Even March and Iolo have bonded somewhat, quietly eating their lunches while Karé tries to fold shiny discarded wrappers into origami shapes. Finn feels like his heart is flying, watching all his friends come together like this.

His eyes widen suddenly and he jolts straight up. Poe looks at him inquisitively, giving up his air of impassiveness in his honest curiosity.

“I’ll be right back,” he says vaguely and practically falls out of his seat in his scramble to get back to his room. He almost trips over twice on his way down the corridors in his haste but he makes sure he walks extra carefully all the way back.

“Everybody smile!” he calls and all their heads snap towards him as he clicks the button on his camera. He grins happily at how startled they all look, but then Snap whoops and grabs Jess to lift her into his lap and suddenly all of them are clamouring to be in the front of the photo, even Iolo and March, surprisingly. Finn laughs, delighted, and tries to get them all to stop moving long enough to take a good photo but finds that that’s an impossible task and just clicks away wildly, trying to capture the happiness of this moment. It all devolves into Karé plucking the camera out of his hand and promptly losing it to Enif, and the camera makes its way around the table as they all take as many photos as they can.

“This was a good idea,” Poe whispers, his lips right next to Finn’s ear. Finn suppresses a shiver and rolls his shoulders back, trying to get himself under control. He fails spectacularly, giving in and turning his head to capture Poe’s lips in a kiss far too intimate for their public setting.
He’s proven right when half the table makes adorable cooing noises and the other half fake gags. Finn smiles against Poe’s lips when he hears the snap of the camera going off and surprisingly it’s Poe who’s the one to pull back, blushing. Finn blinks a little, then chases Poe’s lips, and Jess wolf whistles.

“What happened to the shy boy who could barely kiss his husband’s forehead?” she asks incredulously, leering at them and wiggling her eyebrows.

“That boy grew up,” Finn says and feels immediately stupid but Jess laughs happily and claps him on the shoulder.

The rest of lunch passes quickly, too quickly for Finn who wants it to stretch out and bask in the happiness he feels. He gets a picture of Iolo staring at him blankly over a cup of his gloopy stuff, half way through an explanation that it’s called yoghurt, Finn, for the hundredth time, which is the one he’s probably most proud of. He has to cut it short and hurry down to engineering to find Maeve and he leaves the camera in Poe’s safe hands, who holds it above his head and declares himself the king while everyone else groans and accuses him of favouritism.

“You are my favourite,” Finn grins and presses a kiss into Poe’s hair and Poe’s eyes go all soft and warm, the way he’s always looked at Finn, right from the beginning.

Maeve is confused when Finn sheepishly approaches her about getting another ring and honestly he doesn’t blame her. He can’t tell her it’s for Rey, because that would raise some seriously awkward questions about monogamy, so he tells her it’s just in case he or Poe loses theirs. She looks at him weirdly for a few seconds before spinning away and muttering about stupid men underneath her breath and beginning to pull out tools and metal and a whole bunch of stuff that Finn doesn’t understand.

He hums under his breath as he watches her in her element, showing off her craft, her green skin glowing in the soft light of the furnace as she twists the ring into shape. PEN-E spins around on the floor with her little gaggle of droids following her like ducklings and he watches her with a huge amount of fondness thrumming through him.

Maeve drops the ring on the table in front of him when she’s done, it spinning and singing pleasantly. He’s thrown back to when she first presented him with the rings that he and Poe now wear and his dumbfounded reaction, stunned at the thought of sharing something like this with Poe. He reaches out and touches the edge of the new ring and immediately snatches it back, yelping. Maeve snorts and rolls her eyes at him.

“It literally just came out of the flames,” she says and Finn grumbles, feeling dumb.

“Thank you so much for this,” he tells her sincerely and she blushes prettily and giggles.

“Make sure you look after it,” she winks at him and he grins at her, standing up and pulling her into a quick but fierce hug, much to her embarrassment.

“Go,” she pushes his shoulder. “Tell that husband of yours I said hi.”

Finn scoops up PEN-E, listening to her whirr her goodbyes to her little friends, and makes his way back to the medbay for his afternoon shift, letting his mind wander as he walks the corridors. PEN-E whistles suddenly, buzzing in his hand, and Finn looks up to see Poe and BB-8 at the other end of the corridor. He smiles softly and places PEN-E on the floor, letting her roll her way over to the other droid and listening to them beep loudly to each other. Poe laughs and moves out the way as they spin down the corridor together, making his way over to Finn.
“Fancy meeting you here,” he smirks, placing his hands firmly on Finn’s waist. Finn bites his lip and sways into Poe’s body, helpless against the pull he feels.

“I’m not complaining,” he whispers and presses his lips to Poe’s.

It’s instinctive and overwhelming to sink into the kiss, to open his mouth and yield to Poe’s soft lips and teeth and tongue. He slumps forward into Poe’s embrace, lets Poe manoeuvre him until he’s up against the wall, all the while licking into Finn’s mouth filthily. It’s hot and wet and slow and Finn can’t help but think back to this afternoon, imagining this exact scenario, and he pulls back abruptly, trying to breathe.

“Are you okay?” Poe asks quickly, looking concerned. “I’m sorry if I went too fast I just-” he sucks in a breath, “-got caught up I suppose.”

“No it’s good, it’s great, we’re in the middle of the hallway is all,” Finn tells him and Poe laughs sheepishly and steps back a little, stroking his fingers across Finn’s hips reassuringly.

“I didn’t think of that.”

“I wasn’t exactly thinking either,” Finn shoots back and Poe bites his lip, turning the flesh an even brighter red than before. Poe’s lips always look so pretty after Finn’s kissed him, and it’s hard to resist diving right back in and sucking Poe’s bottom lip into his mouth, but he manages to hold himself back.

Tomorrow, he tells himself. Tomorrow.

“I’ve gotta get going,” he reluctantly says and Poe smiles at him widely, making the corner of his eyes crinkle up beautifully.

“Go save lives,” he winks and Finn snorts. “And remember to tell Ferran I said hi.”

“Oh!” Finn almost smacks his own forehead in his sheer dumbness. “Maeve made another ring for us, and she says hi too.”

“She did? That’s fantastic, let me see it,” Poe says eagerly and Finn digs around in his pocket for the ring, dropping it into Poe’s hand.

“It’s exactly the same, that’s so great, we’ll all match,” Poe babbles in an excited voice.

“I had to tell her it was in case one of us lost ours,” Finn says just to hear Poe laugh and he’s not disappointed.

“I can keep this for now, see if I can get it sent to her, as a surprise?”

“That would be so perfect,” Finn’s eyes widen. He can only imagine the soft look she’ll give him when he explains what it means: a physical representation of their unshakeable bond.

Poe presses a kiss to the corner of his mouth, his eyes soft, and puts the ring safely in his pocket.

“I’ll see you tonight,” he murmurs, voice low and intimate.

“I’m looking forward to it,” Finn replies.
Poe’s birthday dawns bright and early with Finn staring at the side of Poe’s face, waiting in jittery anticipation for him to wake up so Finn can get on with it.

He knows that shouldn’t be the attitude to have when taking his first steps into the abyss that is sex but he also knows that if he doesn’t do it soon then he’s going to lose every shred of courage he thought he possessed and have to flee to the furthest edges of the galaxy and take up the life of a hermit.

He takes a deep breath, watching Poe’s chest rise and fall softly and listening to the small whistling noise Poe makes on every exhale. Poe really is a wonder in the morning, his hair all mussed up and his skin warm from sleep, his eyelashes fanning so prettily against his cheekbones and his hands curled up under his chin. Finn’s heart aches with the sweetness of it all, and he’s reminded absently of the way his heart used to spasm in pain when he watched Poe in the mornings before they had sorted their feelings out. It’s infinitely better to lie here and know that Poe is fully his, undisputedly, than to be stuck in that horrific limbo between what his heart wanted and what his head was telling him.

He’s becoming impatient now, though, and reaches out to push Poe’s curls back off his forehead, running his fingers through their softness and scratching his nails just a little against Poe’s scalp. Poe mumbles and shifts around in his sleep, his eyes forming that little furrow between his brows that Finn wants to kiss away, so he leans forward and does just that, adding a kiss to Poe’s adorable nose, his cheek, his ear, his chin, and finally his lips.

Poe’s lips pucker against his like it’s automatic and Finn smiles for a second before shifting and sucking Poe’s bottom lip into his mouth. Poe moans in a soft and sleepy way and Finn swallows it happily, pulling himself away to prop himself up on his elbows over Poe, trying for a better angle.

“What a way to wake up,” Poe mumbles, his eyes still closed but a slow smile creeping across his face.

“Happy birthday,” Finn whispers and starts pressing kisses to the warm skin on Poe’s neck, revelling in the way Poe’s head automatically tips back and how he hums low in his throat.

“A very happy one indeed,” he says, mostly to himself it seems, and Finn moves back up to hover over him.

Poe’s eyes finally open and Finn is helpless against the pull of the smile at the corners of his lips, an immediate reaction upon seeing Poe’s eyes, his favourite colour, comforting and warm in their depth and affection.

“I want to give you a gift,” Finn says, taking a deep breath to steel himself. “And I also want to give myself a gift, so don’t go thinking this is something it’s not, because it’s not.”

“That… Didn’t really make sense, buddy, what are you talking about?”

Finn rolls his eyes but lets the buddy pass, instead rolling his hips down against Poe’s, half hard in his sleep pants and rubbing against Poe’s crotch.

Poe’s eyes immediately widen and he shoots up, pushing Finn back so they’re both upright on the bed, facing each other.

“What? I mean- Finn, no, you can’t give this to me just because it’s my birthday, it’s not right-”
“See, I told you it’s not what you think it is, but there you go, ignoring me.” Finn glares at him but it’s without heat. “Listen to me: I want to do this. I am ready. I’ve been thinking about it since… Well, for a while now,” he admits, thinking back to a few furtive sessions in the shower with his own hand after he’d been making out with Poe, way before they’d had their little talk on Yag’Dhul.

He licks his lips. “Your birthday is really just an excuse,” he continues. “I kind of didn’t get you a gift? Not that,” he explains hurriedly when he sees Poe open his mouth to interject, “Not that this is a birthday gift for you, it’s mostly for me if I’m being honest. I just haven’t had the courage to act on the urge to… You know.”

Poe raises an eyebrow and Finn inexplicably feels heat rise to his face. “Sure I know,” he says and places his palms on Finn’s thighs, spreads his fingers out and rubs gently.

Finn swallows, distracted by how Poe’s touching him. “I just want to make sure you know that this isn’t some weird scenario where I make myself do something I don’t want to do just to please you. I’m in full control of my actions, I consent enthusiastically.”

“Well if it’s enthusiastic,” Poe drawls and Finn grins, licking his lips.

“So we’re good to go?” he asks, thrumming with anticipation.

“Absolutely,” Poe whispers, and leans in to kiss him.

As always, Finn gets a bit lost when Poe’s lips are pressed against his so sweetly, his head going fuzzy with it and his muscles relaxing fully, so it’s a surprise when Poe parts his mouth with his tongue and they both recoil at the taste of their mouths, sour from hours of sleeping.

Poe pulls back and laughs, wiping the back of his hand against his mouth. “I suggest we both go brush our teeth if we’re going to continue,” and Finn nods eagerly, almost launching himself off the bed in his haste to get to the bathroom.

They stand side by side as they brush their teeth, grinning at each other through foamed up mouths as they watch each other in the mirror. Poe spits first, sticking his head under the tap and swishing his mouth out and Finn makes a noise of indignant protest.

“That was not two minutes,” he attempts to say around the toothbrush shoved in his mouth but Poe just grins at him and pulls his shirt over his head, walking back into the bedroom.

“You were saying?” he calls over his shoulder and Finn immediately starts scrubbing his incisors with a fervour he didn’t know he possessed, trying in vain to get himself to speed up so he could get back to the bed. Unfortunately, the rigid need for cleanliness drilled into him over and over again doesn’t let up and he’s left glaring at himself in the mirror, cursing the First Order to hell and back for preventing him from being able to get off with Poe immediately.

He spits and swishes his mouth out, returns the toothbrush back to its holder, and hightails it into the bedroom where Poe’s spread out lazily on top of the bed, his golden skin on display.

Finn climbs on top of him and Poe spreads his legs easily for Finn to fit between them, shoving his hands instantly up the back of Finn’s shirt and teasing his fingers up his spine. Finn hisses and mashes their lips together, the angle all wrong in his haste, but he quickly corrects himself and they fall into a rhythm of hot kisses, Poe sucking on his top lip and Finn groaning into his mouth.

“Off, off, I want this off,” Poe pants and scrambles to get Finn’s shirt rucked up to his armpits. Finn shrugs it off inelegantly and immediately lowers himself so they’re chest to chest, both of them breathing heavily, their skin a little slick with sweat.
Finn buries his face in Poe’s neck and starts licking at the skin, biting, leaving tiny red marks behind as he makes his way to Poe’s collarbone where he sucks a larger mark. Poe whimpers and his hands fly to Finn’s head, scratching his nails through his short hair and Finn groans in return.

It’s like a chain reaction, he thinks dazedly as he kisses his way down Poe’s chest, listening to him chant yes, yes, yes, over and over again. The pleasure he’s getting from reducing Poe to this whimpering, writhing mess on the sheets is insane, and he feels giddy with it, high. Poe’s fingers scrabble against his back and he scratches his nails down Finn’s scar at the same time as Finn licks across his nipple and both of them hiss and arch into each other, their cocks brushing together finally.

Finn’s hips jerk and he whispers, grinding down into Poe’s hard length, feeling it twitch against his own. Poe sucks in a sharp breath and all but drags Finn upwards, sealing their lips together again and drinking in Finn’s breathy noises as he purposefully angles their hips together and thrusts up.

The friction is unlike anything Finn’s felt before, feeling even more wound up than he’s been in the previous times they’ve gotten this far. Maybe that’s because he knows they’re not going to stop this time, that they’re going to carry on and it’s going to be incredible. He garbles out some words that sound like yes and more and Poe, may the Jedi bless his soul, flips them over and grinds his hips down, hard.

“Are you still sure?” he asks, his voice deep and low. Finn nods so hard he almost hurts his neck, staring up at Poe in awe.

He looks incredible like this, his shirt off and his brown skin glistening just slightly, his hair damp and curling around his ears and across his forehead, his lips a bitten pink. Finn squirms underneath him, trying not to imagine what a mess he probably looks.

He focuses instead on how Poe grabs his hand and guides it towards the waistband of his sleep pants, biting his lip and giving Finn a significant look. Finn gets the picture, of course, he’s not completely useless, but he takes a moment to skirt his fingers through the hair that trails down beneath Poe’s belly button, appreciating the way Poe’s cock jumps a little beneath the fabric of his pants when Finn ghosts his hand over it.

He presses more firmly, the flat of his palm against the head of Poe’s dick, rubbing a little so his fingers touch Poe’s balls through the fabric as well and Poe punches out a breathy fuck that makes Finn’s vision flicker back up to his face.

His eyes are scrunched up and he’s biting on his lip so hard that it looks like it hurts, the veins in his neck standing out in his struggle to stay still and let Finn explore. Finn takes pity on him and pulls his hand away, admiring the small wet spot Poe’s dick has left on the fabric, and then slips both his hands under the waistband of Poe’s pants, pushing them down to around his thighs and watching Poe’s dick smack against his stomach, long and hard and brown like the rest of him, reddened at the tip.

“My turn,” Poe breathes and promptly kicks his pants off the rest of the way before looking into Finn’s eyes for any signs of hesitancy and, when he finds none, pulling Finn’s pants down and all the way off. He runs his hands up Finn’s thighs reverently, digging his fingers into the muscle and encouraging him to part his legs a little bit more. Finn goes easily, pliant under Poe, his chest feeling just a little bit tight as he wonders whether he passes muster.

“Oh **Finn**,” Poe breathes, his gaze on Finn’s cock. Unexpectedly, it thickens a little bit more under Poe’s appreciative gaze and Poe grins, flicking his eyes up to Finn’s face.

“You like that, huh?” he asks rhetorically. Finn couldn’t answer right now if his life depended on it,
his tongue too thick in his mouth and his throat closed up in his haze of want. “You’re doing so good, my love,” and Finn can’t help the whine that escapes his mouth.

“You okay? You’re still good?” Poe questions and Finn can tell it’s a serious question now, so he breathes shakily through his nerves and yanks Poe down onto him, aligning their bodies together.

They both groan sharply as their hips press flush together, their cocks rubbing against each other, and Finn’s eyes close automatically as his breath hitches at the new sensation. Poe is so hot against him, so undeniably hard but his skin is soft. It overwhelms him for a moment, how everything feels pressed together like this, close an intimate, how sensitive his cock is to every brush of Poe’s body against him.

Poe pushes himself up onto his elbows, pressing his forehead to Finn’s, and carefully rolls his hips, grinding their dicks together and creating incredibly friction that sends sparks up Finn’s spine and makes him arch his back up into it.

“That’s it,” Poe breathes, “You’re doing so good, you feel so good, Finn.”

Finn almost chokes on the force of his whine, locking his arms around Poe’s back in an effort to bring him closer. Poe shifts his weight and lifts Finn’s leg up so his calf rests against the small of his back, his thigh hitched up high, and rolls his hips down again. The angle changes and takes Finn’s breath away, their cocks pressed together all the way down to their balls, and Finn honestly doesn’t think he’s going to last very long at all.

He’s distantly aware he’s making little uh, uh, uh, noises every time Poe thrusts down against him and Poe’s pressing kisses against his mouth, open and wet but shallow as he concentrates on utterly wrecking Finn’s capacity for higher thought.

He succeeds brilliantly, and it’s not long until Finn feels a tingling wave rush through him and he’s coming against his belly in wet surges, Poe groaning as he fucks his hips through it.

He’s limp against the bed, sweaty and loose limbed, his thoughts stuck in a fuzzy cloud of static that’s hard to think through. Poe’s fluttering little kisses against his skin, his cheeks, his neck, his chest, and Finn hums low in his chest in his happiness.

“You back with me, stud?” Poe teases and Finn finds the strength somewhere to poke him in the side. Poe flinches and laughs, his body jolting, and Finn feels that his dick is still hard against his stomach, leaking sticky fluid onto Finn’s skin that leaves him feeling hot and dirty.

“I wanna,” he attempts, his voice weak. “I want to touch you,” he continues and Poe breathes deeply for a second before rolling off of him and lounging lazily on his back, gesturing for Finn to climb on top.

“Go crazy,” he says, and his voice is hoarse.

_I did that to him_, Finn thinks hazily, and his heart thumps hard and fast in his chest. He feels inordinately proud of how Poe looks, flushed and sweaty, his pupils blown wide and his lips a bitten red, marks against his neck that Finn made with his teeth and tongue, and he knows that if Poe turned over he’d have scratch marks all over his back from where Finn’s nails have dug in.

He spreads his hands over Poe’s thighs, hairier than his own and slimmer, but beautifully strong. They yield to Finn’s touch, falling apart so he can slot himself between them. He trails his fingers up over the sharp dip of Poe’s hips, over the hair on his stomach just to see his belly flutter, not touching his dick even though he really wants to. Poe pants above his head, holding himself still for Finn, his
chest heaving, and Finn seals his mouth over his nipple and flicks his tongue against the nub.

Poe’s silence breaks and he arches his back and moans, the sound sweet to Finn’s ears. His hands fly up to dig his fingers into Finn’s shoulders and Finn shudders, feeling his cock starting to get thick again. He licks over Poe’s nipple, feeling it harden under his tongue, and then gently sets his teeth to the flesh. Poe whines and grips his shoulders harder, urging him on. Finn takes his time and laves over the flesh again and again, making it red by sucking on it, and then bites again, a little harder.

“Fuck,” Poe hisses between his teeth.

Finn massages his fingers into the swell of Poe’s hips, palming the plump skin there and letting his fingers dip behind and brush the small of Poe’s back as he switches to Poe’s other nipple. His hands wander as he gives this nipple the same attention as the other, listening to the sweet high pitched noises Poe’s making, and lifting up Poe’s hips slightly in order to dig his fingers into his ass, massaging his cheeks and hearing Poe groan.

He leaves Poe’s chest and slicks their mouths together instead, letting Poe whimper into his mouth and run his fingers through his hair as he fucks his tongue the same way that Poe had done his hips earlier. Noises spill out of Poe’s throat that Finn feels giddy to hear, to know that he’s caused that, and he’s smiling too hard to effectively kiss Poe any longer.

“Finn, please, touch me, please,” Poe babbles against his lips. Finn can’t resist that request and removes his palms from Poe’s ass to push himself upwards.

He looks down at Poe, in all his debauched glory, and contemplates how to go about this. It can’t be that much harder than jerking himself off, he knows, since a dick is a dick and Finn’s had plenty of practice with his own. But it won’t feel the same, he knows, the angle slightly different and the weight and length different too. Not only that, but he won’t be able to instinctively know what feels good or not because he won’t be the one feeling it. He’s going to have to listen closely to all of Poe’s noises, study what gets him off the most and file it all away to remember forever. In all the situations his Stormtrooper training could have come in handy, he honestly didn’t envision this.

He takes a deep breath and traces the tips of his fingers over Poe’s cock, ever so gently. Poe sucks in a sharp breath and hisses through his teeth as Finn takes his time rubbing over the head of his cock, getting his fingers sticky with fluid. Poe’s uncut, unlike Finn, who, along with every other Stormtrooper with a penis, had the operation when he was too young to have a choice. It’s new, and weird, and he uses his other hand to gently pull down the extra skin and expose him. He rubs harder against the slit at the tip and Poe’s hips jerk suddenly. So that’s something he likes then.

He moves on, cupping Poe’s balls in his palm and rolling them. He flicks his eyes up to Poe’s face and finds Poe staring down at him intensely, his lip caught between his teeth.

“What do you know how good you look right now?” he murmurs, touching shaking fingers to Finn’s face. Finn’s dick aches against his thigh, rapidly hardening up again.

In an attempt to distract himself from the flush he feels crawling over his skin, he wraps his palm around Poe’s length and jerks once, running his hand from tip to base and spreading the fluid down Poe’s dick. Things go easier with a little lubrication, Finn knows, so he does his best to slick Poe up with what he’s got, listening to the way Poe’s breath hitches in his chest every time he swipes his palm across the top of his dick.

“You’re doing great, just like that,” he encourages, clutching at Finn’s biceps as they flex in time with his movements. Finn catches his lips between his teeth and speeds his hand up, tightening his grip and fucking Poe’s cock through his fist harder.
Poe’s hips jerk upwards and he throws his head back, closing his eyes and moaning over and over. Finn uses his other hand to rub over Poe’s nipple, and Poe’s back arches sharply and he comes all over Finn’s fingers.

It’s incredible and weird all at once, the way that Poe’s entire body tightens up and then lets loose, his sticky come strangely warm against Finn’s fingers. It’s hot, though, and his dick twitches against his belly where he’s fully hard again and aching.


“Come here,” he murmurs and Finn chases his lips like he needs them to survive, sighing when Poe sucks his lips into his mouth over and over, biting the flesh.

He’s mumbling praise that makes Finn feel warm all over, his fingers stroking over the long scar on Finn’s back and making him shiver.

“Come here, come here,” he whispers again and Finn follows the command blindly, letting Poe pull him in until they’re flush together. His cock is trapped between his and Poe’s stomach’s uncomfortably, their skin tacky from drying cooled come and Finn whines into Poe’s mouth, instinctively seeking friction. Poe hums and drags his palms down Finn’s back until he has two handfuls of Finn’s ass, squeezing and pulling at his cheeks. Finn’s skin feels too tight and his hips start rolling down until Poe taps him sharply on the ass and he stops.

“Get on your back,” he whispers. Finn tries to breathe through the fog in his mind to protest.

“You don’t have to—” he tries to say but Poe shushes him, pushing at his shoulders until Finn rolls over and Poe can straddle his thighs, leaning down over him and smiling so hard his eyes crinkle up.

“So pretty,” he says, and it sounds like it’s mostly for himself, but Finn preens anyway. “So beautiful, so good, just for me.”

He wraps his palm around Finn’s length and starts jerking him off, kissing down his chest all the while. Finn throws his head back against the pillow and lets himself be pulled under the tide of pleasure that washes over him, Poe tightening his grip and twisting his fist at the base, using his other hand to squeeze Finn’s balls in his palm, rolling them against one another. Finn’s only half aware that he’s letting out a constant stream of moans, a mix of Poe’s name and pleading to several deities as Poe’s mouth continues its slow descent down his torso.

“You’re so lovely, look at you, you’re so thick,” he rubs his thumb against the head of Finn’s cock and Finn whines, long and drawn out. “You sound so pretty too,” he murmurs, licking at Finn’s hip bones.

He’s bent over, still sat on Finn’s thighs, and Finn can only really see the mess of dark curls on the top of his head and his shoulders, moving fast as he pulls Finn off swiftly.

Finn’s toes curl, his hands twisted in the rumpled bed sheets, and the air itself seems heavy, everything hot and building more and more like fire. Poe hovers his mouth over the tip of Finn’s dick for a second, breathing warm air against his sensitive head, and Finn comes immediately when he seals his mouth over the tip, sucking gently. He continues to suck as Finn fills his mouth and Finn can’t believe how soft and wet his mouth feels, how unbelievable his tongue feels as it flutters against the underside of his cock.

Finn, spent, flops back against the pillows as Poe straightens up again and swallows, wiping his hand across the back of his mouth to catch any of the spill.
“Fuck,” Finn heaves eloquently. Poe giggles and Finn’s struck by how innocent it sounds considering what they just did.

He feels like he’s floating a little in his mind, coming down gently from his high, and he abruptly realises that he’s done it. He feels so proud of himself that he almost pumps his fist in the air before picturing how ridiculous that would look.

Poe leans in and kisses him slowly, licks into his mouth and brushes their tongues together. Finn winces a bit at the taste and Poe must feel it because he pulls back, laughing.

“Yeah, it’s an acquired taste,” he chuckles. “We’ll need to brush our teeth again, and shower, actually,” he says, pulling a face at the sticky mess on his stomach.

“Let me just,” Finn tries to say. He wants to stay here for a little bit and stare at Poe, looking dishevelled and radiant perched on his thighs, almost glowing in his beauty.

“Come on, slow poke, it’s my birthday, which means cake for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Get a move on, I don’t want to miss it.”

Finn throws his head back and laughs. “You sound more excited for the cake than you were for this,” he accuses teasingly.

Poe’s eyes dance with delight and he waggles his eyebrows. “I only get birthday cake once a year,” he says, “But I’ll get to do this with you every day.”

Finn’s eyes widen at that. To be fair, now that he’s leapt off the edge of the cliff all he wants to do is climb back up and do it all over again, even more spectacularly this time. He can’t wait.

“Well, come on then, tomorrow won’t come if you dawdle,” he grins and rushes to the shower, hearing Poe yelp indignantly behind him and scramble to follow.

The water is warm against his front and Poe is solid against his back as he crowds into the shower with Finn, wrapping his arms tight around his waist. Finn tangles their fingers together and watches the water run across their rings and thinks he’s happy.

He has a place, a home in Poe’s arms, and he’s never going to feel lost again.

Chapter End Notes

i’m so incredibly sorry for the HELLISHLY LONG wait on this final chapter and i hope to god you all enjoyed it. it’s currently 4am and i’m so glad it’s finished that i could cry and i actually did when google docs suggested i change "carrying a piece of poe around with him" to "carrying a piece of pie around with him"
THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HAS STUCK WITH ME THROUGH THIS. i thank you for every kudos, every comment, every bookmark, every ask in my inbox on my tumblr, every person who messaged me and told me how much they liked this fic and how i shouldn’t stress myself over writing it. i cannot express how it feels to receive positive feedback, it literally makes flowers grow in my heart. the best feeling in the world is seeing an email that says someone commented on this fic so thank you so much for the wild response to this!!!
i love talking about this fic and it's easier for me to reply on my tumblr so feel free to head over there if you have any questions or queries or want to me to expand on something, i'm so grateful and so glad it's finally completed and i can relax and have fun now

you may be wondering: why was the wait for this chapter so long? well. real life sucks, basically. and i'm also kinda writing something else on the side so keep ur eyes peeled lmao thank u i'm OUT

End Notes

i have never written in star wars fandom before so PLEASE if i've made any mistakes point them out so i can fix them!
the calendar system is mostly accurate from what i could scrape together from the star wars wiki but some of it is made up so just roll with it. the geography of the galaxy that finn and poe discuss is an actual thing and it's amazing check it out! the tree finn sits under in the third chapter is the force tree gifted to poe, shamelessly stolen from this fic which is beyond incredible and i implore all of you to read. all the aliens mentioned in this fic are actual legit things which you can find on this handy list right here. the trees in chapter three are inspired by an episode of doctor who!
i want to make it clear that i'm exaggerating the height difference between finn and poe because the poe in my head is a teeny tiny man. when i describe him as slight, i mean in comparison to finn, who is quite broad and thick.
if anyone has any further questions/wants to have general convo about headcanons n shit, hit me up on my tumblr

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